

Abrahamic Descent, Testamentary Adoption, and the Law in Galatians

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Abrahamic Descent, Testamentary Adoption, and the Law in Galatians

*Differentiating Abraham's Sons, Seed, and
Children of Promise*

By

Bradley R. Trick



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For Elizabeth



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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–.
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
AUSDDS	Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 2d ed. Chicago, 1979.
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGU	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden</i> . 15 vols. Berlin, 1895–1983.
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BIAP	<i>Bulletin International de l'Academie polonaise des sciences et des lettres (Classe de philologie, Classe d'histoire et de philosophie)</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BRS	Biblical Resource Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology

<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina. Turnhout, 1953–.
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Études bibliques</i>
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios Biblicos</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAB	Frankfurter althistorische Beiträge
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IVPNTCS	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio divina
LDC	Lectio divina, commentaires
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.

LXX	Septuagint
<i>Mils</i>	<i>Milltown Studies</i>
MSBen	Monographic Series of Benedictina
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>MTZ</i>	<i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTAbh, n. F.	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, neue Folge
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
PL	Patrologia latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864.
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RHRP</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLABib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
<i>SCJR</i>	<i>Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations</i>
SD	Studies and Documents

SJTOP	Scottish Journal of Theology: Occasional Papers
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976.
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae® Digital Library. Ed. Maria C. Pantelia. University of California, Irvine. http://www.tlg.uci.edu .
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBS ⁴	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , United Bible Societies, 4th ed.
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZABR	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Introduction



Abrahamic Descent in Galatians: Sons, Seed, and Children of Promise

The Challenge of Abrahamic Descent in Galatians

Abrahamic descent looms large in Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. It first appears in Gal 3:6–14, which infers from a citation of Gen 15:6 that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are “sons of Abraham” (υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ, 3:7). Galatians 3:15–4:11 then focuses on the single “seed of Abraham” (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα), a designation that Paul applies to Christ (3:16) and, subsequently, to those who are “of Christ” (3:29). Finally, Gal 4:21–5:1 develops an allegorical interpretation of Abraham's two sons and their mothers in which Paul identifies the Galatians as Abrahamic “children of promise” (ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα, 4:28). The bulk of Gal 3–4—roughly a third of the total letter—thus consists of three main arguments, each of which invokes a different image of Abrahamic descent: sons, seed, and children of promise, respectively.

Not only do these Abrahamic appeals occupy a significant portion of the letter, but they also provide the primary scriptural/theological grounding for the letter's intensely polemical argument. Although scholars debate the precise details of the Galatian controversy, the central point of contention seems fairly certain: those whom Paul identifies as “agitators” (5:12; cf. 1:7, 5:10) were, in accordance with the Jewish law, advocating circumcision for the Galatian Christians (6:12–13).¹ Paul finds this position so inimical to the gospel that the Galatians' acceptance of it would sever their relationship to Christ (5:2–4) and render Paul's labor among them vain (4:11). He accordingly writes—with great passion and vehemence (e.g., 1:8–9; 5:12)—to exhort the Galatian Christians to stand firm in their uncircumcised state and refrain from coming under the Jewish law (e.g., 5:1–6).

At first glance, Abraham appears to be a rather odd choice for grounding an argument against the necessity of a subsequent circumcision. After all, Abraham himself receives circumcision (Gen 17:9–14) *after* he is reckoned righteous for his trust in God (Gen 15:6, cited in Gal 3:6), a point that Paul himself makes in Rom 4:9–12. Genesis 17:9–14 also expressly commands the

1 See, e.g., John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73–93, 86, 88.

circumcision of any male belonging to the household of Abraham. Thus, whether as authoritative example or as familial progenitor, the patriarch would seem to support the agitators'—not Paul's—position. For many scholars, the actual details of Paul's argument do little to allay this initial assessment.

Considering the arguments individually, for instance, the seemingly universal conclusion that 3:6–7 redefines Abrahamic sonship based solely on faith creates problems for, among other things, Paul's continuing recognition of Israel as a distinct, ethnic-based entity. Scholars also question the basis for—and, accordingly, the cogency of—identifying Abraham's sole seed as Christ rather than Isaac in 3:16. As for the allegorical interpretation of Abraham's family offered in 4:21–5:1, the aligning of such traditionally Jewish entities as the Sinaitic διαθήκη and the present Jerusalem with the slave woman Hagar rather than the Jewish matriarch Sarah strikes many readers as an unjustified twisting of the Genesis narrative.

Determining how the various portrayals of Abrahamic descent fit together collectively raises even more difficulties. Does Abrahamic descent depend on πίστις alone (3:7), on integration into Christ (3:29), or both? If both, i.e., if we understand πίστις and Christ as essentially inseparable, then on what basis does Christ himself become Abraham's sole seed (3:16), and how does Abraham's theocentric faith become the sole criterion of a sonship that purportedly includes only Christians (3:6–7)? Or again, if, according to Gal 3:16, Isaac is not Abraham's promised seed, then how can Paul invoke Isaac as the preeminent example (κατὰ Ἰσαάκ) of the children of promise in 4:28? These issues arise just within Galatians; trying to reconcile the portrayals with the discussions of Abrahamic descent in Rom 4:1–25 and 9:6–13 complicates matters still further.

Exacerbating the problem, Gal 3:6–14, 3:15–4:11, and 4:21–5:1 all employ arguments that often appear convoluted and arbitrary even apart from their Abrahamic aspects. To note just a few of the questions that perplex modern readers, how does the claim in 3:10 that “everyone who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law is cursed” prove that “as many as are [justified] on the basis of works of law are under a curse”? Why does the mediated nature of the law pose a problem in 3:19–20 when Christ also seems to mediate on behalf of believers (cf. 3:29)? Finally, on what basis does Paul apply Isa 54:1 to his allegorical interpretation of Sarah and Hagar in Gal 4:27?

As the ensuing chapters will detail, current interpretations of Galatians largely fail to resolve these issues in a compelling manner. Whether or not interpreters acknowledge the difficulties, most readings present Paul's Abrahamic arguments as logically problematical and/or collectively inconsistent. Moreover, to the extent that scholars do manage to resolve the various

logical issues, they tend to resolve them in creative ways that, for one reason or another, would seem to have little chance of convincing the Galatians. The latter type of interpretation thus preserves coherent theological content at the expense of the letter's intended persuasive function. The former type sacrifices the content as well.

It is, of course, possible that Paul simply makes a series of poor arguments or that he misjudges his audience's capacity to follow his reasoning. Scholars can even point to evidence that seems to justify such conclusions. They account for the arguments' seemingly incoherent nature, for example, by identifying the Abrahamic appeals as *ad hoc* responses to the agitators' use of Abraham. That is to say, they explain the apparent weakness of Paul's appeals by suggesting that the agitators have trapped him into arguing from a bad position; had he been free to make his own case—so the reasoning goes—he would surely have provided a more compelling argument against the necessity of a subsequent circumcision.² As for the letter's persuasive function, the contrast between the expectation in 1 Cor 16:1–4 that the Galatian churches would participate in the collection for Jerusalem and the churches' conspicuous absence from the list of contributors in Rom 15:25–27 could well indicate that the agitators succeeded in weaning the Galatian churches away from Paul.³ We therefore have some reason to believe that Paul's letter actually failed to persuade the Galatians.

The conclusion that Paul makes a poor or insufficiently clear argument, however, has troubling implications in light of the high stakes that he attributes to the controversy in Galatia. Regardless of the letter's ultimate effectiveness (or lack thereof), Paul clearly intends to present an argument that he believes the Galatians should find compelling. Christopher Stanley thus rightly highlights the danger inherent in ignoring Paul's persuasive intent as an evaluative criterion:

the modern interpreter [needs to] keep one question in mind at every point in attempting to analyze Paul's letter to the Galatians: how does this fit into Paul's strategy to persuade his Galatian readers? Too often a single-minded focus on Paul's 'theology' or his 'opponents' has been allowed to obscure this fundamental question, leading to false deductions regarding Paul's own ideas or the identity and position of those whose views he is seeking to counter. . . . it is Paul's persuasive intent that remains primary

² E.g., C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," in *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 154–70, 162.

³ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 29, 222–28.

at every point, and the modern interpreter must read all that he says in the light of this concern or else risk misunderstanding.⁴

Coherent interpretations of the argument that nevertheless have little foreseeable chance of persuading the Galatians therefore seem unlikely to represent Paul's line of thought, raising the distinct possibility that such resolutions effectively articulate a different, distorted understanding of the gospel (cf. 1:6–7).

Even more troubling, the inability to find a coherent model of Abrahamic descent in Galatians—especially when set against the relative ease with which scholars reconstruct the agitators' purported Abrahamic argument⁵—threatens to undermine the very gospel itself by suggesting that it cannot effectively counter a Judaizing call that derives from a simple appeal to Abraham. This inability implies, in other words, that the agitators actually have the stronger argument. The hermeneutical implications for Jewish-Christian relations resonate throughout the ensuing centuries: if an arbitrary and admittedly unpersuasive series of arguments represents the best scriptural defense that Christianity has to offer in response to Judaism, then is it any wonder that Christian interactions with Jews have so often substituted unjustified caricature, arbitrary fiat, and violence for reasoned dialogue?

Fortunately, other factors point to the likelihood that Paul offers a stronger argument in Galatians than interpreters generally recognize. First and foremost among these factors stands the battle-tested nature of Paul's Abrahamic gospel. Paul could have undercut the agitators' ability to appeal to Abraham as a basis for circumcision simply by denying the necessity of Abrahamic descent for Christians. That he does not make such a claim accordingly suggests that Abrahamic descent plays an integral role in his own understanding of the gospel, a suggestion further supported by the reaffirmation of this descent in Romans (e.g., 4:11–12).⁶ Moreover, Paul has already encountered Judaizing arguments in both Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10) and Antioch (2:11–18), successfully overcoming them in at least the former instance. Given the apparent importance of Abraham both to Paul's gospel and to the case for Judaizing, it seems improbable that Paul could have emerged from such episodes—not to mention his own transition from persecutor to apostle (1:15–24)—without devising

4 Christopher D. Stanley, "‘Under a Curse’: A Fresh Reading of Galatians 3.10–14," *NTS* 36 (1990): 481–511, 491–92.

5 Martyn, e.g., claims to have reconstructed the agitators' sermon on Abrahamic descent "with a reasonable degree of probability" (*Galatians*, 303–6).

6 Cf. James Hardy Ropes, *The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians* (HTS 14; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 7–8.

a coherent understanding of Abraham's role. He also exhibits no awareness that his audience might find his argument problematical. Thus, while subtle difficulties might remain, we would not expect his argument to exhibit the kind of blatant problems identified above. Indeed, arguing his case so poorly would only strengthen the agitators' position by exposing the relative theological bankruptcy of Paul's gospel.

Certain physical realities of first-century letter composition also increase the probability of a more coherent argument. As E. Randolph Richards observes, Paul's claim to write in his own hand beginning in 6:11 indicates that a secretary penned the rest of the letter.⁷ Noting that the use of a secretary would likely have required a minimum of four drafts (including at least one revision), Richards then calculates that a letter the size of Galatians would have taken at least four days to complete.⁸ This extended composition time makes it difficult to attribute any ill-formed arguments to haste or the passion of the moment. Moreover, both the secretary and Paul's coauthors—"all the brothers with [him]" (1:2)—would have been party to his dictation and thus able to offer constructive criticisms of poor arguments.⁹ Granted, later revisions and the input of coauthors could also introduce inconsistencies, but Paul seems unlikely to have overlooked the introduction of such fundamentally incoherent or inconsistent arguments as scholars often claim to find in Galatians.

These considerations lead to the *a priori* expectation that Paul would offer a coherent and potentially persuasive argument. In accordance with this expectation, I will ultimately argue that Galatians does indeed present such an argument. Before turning to the substance of this claim, however, I first need to define the criterion of "potential persuasiveness" more concretely. After all, while "coherence" provides a fairly objective criterion for assessment—either the argument holds together logically or it does not—"persuasiveness" would seem to constitute an inherently subjective standard. How, then, can we determine what counts as a potentially persuasive argument (and, perhaps more importantly, what does not) without lapsing into subjective judgments, especially given the aforementioned probability that Paul's argument did not actually persuade the Galatians? The answer, I suggest, lies in allowing the letter's rhetorical situation to establish the criterion's parameters.

7 E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 24 n. 19, 81.

8 *Ibid.*, 164–65.

9 *Ibid.*, 45.

Paul's Persuasive Intent as Crucial Constraint for Interpreting His Abrahamic Appeals

Lloyd Bitzer seminally defines a “rhetorical situation” as

a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.¹⁰

It thus comprises an exigence (“an imperfection [in the situation] marked by urgency”), an audience capable of remedying or mitigating that exigence, and the constraints with which a rhetor must work.¹¹ Bitzer further notes that a rhetorical situation necessarily shapes the discourse to which it gives rise: “every situation prescribes its fitting response.”¹² A rhetorical situation, in other words, determines not only a rhetor’s persuasive intent but also the appropriate expression of that intent. Correctly discerning the rhetorical situation of Galatians accordingly provides a necessary level of objectivity in evaluating interpretations: we need only to establish the nature of the rhetorical situation and then determine how its various features constrain Paul’s argument.¹³ Of

10 Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14, 6. For a more nuanced development of Bitzer’s insights that takes advantage of the intervening literature, see Keith Grant-Davie, “Rhetorical Situations and Their Constituents,” *Rhetoric Review* 15 (1994): 264–79. See also Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 14–19. B. C. Lategan, “The Argumentative Situation of Galatians,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 383–95, 384; repr. from *Neot* 26.2 (1992): 257–70, distinguishes between the rhetorical situation (focused on strategies) and the argumentative situation (focused on issues), a distinction I do not observe.

11 Bitzer, “Rhetorical,” 8. He also identifies the rhetor and the discourse as additional constituents that subsequently enter into the situation. On the nature of “constraints” as a neutral term encompassing both helpful and restrictive elements, see Grant-Davie, “Rhetorical,” 272.

12 Bitzer, “Rhetorical,” 11.

13 While the irrational nature of human beings and the multiplicity of factors that can affect a person’s judgment make it impossible to determine an argument’s actual persuasiveness apart from results, we can assess the types of argument that would be most likely to persuade in a given situation. The resulting focus on persuasive intent thus renders the letter’s actual persuasiveness, whether to the Galatians or to anyone else, irrelevant.

course, we cannot assume that Paul always makes a rhetorically appropriate argument—as Bitzer observes, “a rhetor may or may not read the [situation’s] prescription accurately”¹⁴—but we should, I suggest, nevertheless prefer interpretations that better fit the rhetorical situation.

This task of determining the rhetorical situation presents quite a challenge for Galatians. To be sure, throughout much of the church’s history, interpreters found the letter to provide a relatively clear reflection of its historical-rhetorical situation: the identification of the Galatian agitators as Jewish Christians who regard Torah observance (and circumcision specifically) as necessary for salvation or, possibly, perfection has dominated both ancient and modern interpretations.¹⁵ Within the last century, however, alternative scenarios have begun to proliferate as scholars have wrestled with ambiguities and tensions inherent both in this traditional reconstruction and in the letter itself. Proposals now debate such issues as whether the Galatian agitators were non-Christian Jews, Jewish Christians, or gentile Christian proselytes; whether they saw themselves as opponents of Paul or as furthering his work; whether they were indigenous to the Galatian churches or only recently arrived; whether or not they were related to the Jerusalem church; whether or not the community had divided over their influence; and what, exactly, they preached.

I do not propose to try to resolve all of these issues here. Indeed, the interdependence of the rhetorical situation and Paul’s argument makes it impossible to resolve one completely without resolving the other: just as the rhetorical situation provides a check on interpretations of Paul’s argument, so the interpretation of Paul’s argument helps to determine the nature of the rhetorical situation. Thus, for example, Walter Schmithals’s admission that the letter’s extensive Abrahamic arguments engage a typically Jewish view of the law effectively undermines his suggestion that the letter opposes a gnostic group advocating circumcision apart from any requirements for full law observance.¹⁶

Rather than trying to provide a comprehensive analysis of the rhetorical situation, this section therefore focuses instead on establishing a few basic

14 Bitzer, “Rhetorical,” 11.

15 E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 117–26.

16 Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 41. Based on the lack of specific references to the Galatian situation in the Abrahamic passages, Schmithals identifies these passages as preformed segments from Paul’s debates with Jews that the apostle inserts here only to establish his own view of circumcision. As many scholars note, this suggestion still cannot explain why Paul would include these essentially unrelated arguments instead of simply engaging the position he was purportedly refuting.

elements that will help ground—and be tested by—the subsequent analysis. I should note, too, that in seeking to establish the rhetorical situation, I am seeking to reconstruct not the actual historical situation in Galatia but Paul's perception of that situation. After all, it is his perception of the crisis that shapes his response.¹⁷ Accordingly, regardless of their potential historical value, proposals claiming, e.g., that Paul misunderstood and therefore misidentified the agitators have no relevance to this discussion.¹⁸ I will also follow Paul's lead in referring to the group that he opposes as "agitators." Although scholars seeking to understand these agitators on their own terms rightly note the prejudicial nature of Paul's label,¹⁹ it is this prejudice that informs Paul's argument.

How, then, does Paul understand the situation in Galatia? The clearest indications come in 6:12–13 as part of the coda that Paul adds in his own hand (6:11):

¹²As many as desire to make a good showing in [the] flesh, these compel [ἀναγκάζουσιν] you to be circumcised [περιτέμνεσθαι] simply so that for the cross of Christ they might not be persecuted. ¹³For not even οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι themselves keep [the] law, but they desire you to be circumcised [περιτέμνεσθαι] so that in your flesh they might boast.

Several points deserve mention. To begin, the verses explicitly portray the agitators as compelling (ἀναγκάζουσιν) the Galatian Christians to be circumcised, a phrasing that sets them in parallel to Peter, who compelled (ἀναγκάζεις) the gentiles to Judaize at Antioch (2:14), and in contrast to "those of reputation" in Jerusalem who did *not* compel (οὐδέ... ἡναγκάσθη) Titus to be circumcised (2:3). Combined with circumcision's prominence throughout the letter (2:3, 7–9, 12; 5:2, 3, 6, 11; 6:12–15) and the lack of any other positions

17 Cf. Stanley, "Curse," 488; Lategan, "Situation," 384. Since Galatians provides direct evidence for Paul's perception but only indirect evidence for the situation in Galatia, reconstructing the former avoids the methodological difficulties that arise when trying to move from the letter to the actual situation in Galatia.

18 E.g., Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to its Problems* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 53–56, suggests that Paul "did not fully understand the position of his opponents" (55) and therefore interpreted his gnostic opponents as more familiar "Pharisaic Judaists." Notably, Marxsen abandons this suggestion in the fourth German edition: *Einleitung in das Neue Testament: Eine Einführung in ihre Probleme* (4th ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1978), 66–70.

19 For discussion of the various labels that interpreters have applied to this group, see Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 115–31.

explicitly attributed to the agitators, this observation suggests that their advocacy of circumcision forms the immediate point of contention. That Paul justifies (γάρ) his proposal for the agitators' motivation (6:12) by asserting that even οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι do not keep the law (6:13) then implies that he understood the agitators to promote circumcision on the grounds of keeping the law (Exod 12:48; Lev 12:3; cf. Acts 15:1–5; Josephus, *A.J.* 20.43–46).

This focus on circumcision enables us to define the major parties. The Galatians' uncircumcised state clearly identifies Paul's intended audience as gentiles.²⁰ In contrast, the advocacy of law-based circumcision identifies the agitators as in some sense Jewish, whether non-Christian Jews, gentile Christian proselytes, or, as most interpreters have claimed, Jewish Christians. Other aspects of 6:12–13 help us decide between these three options.

For example, the agitators' proposed motivation of avoiding persecution for “the cross of Christ” in 6:12 effectively implies that they are Christian. Since non-Christian Jews did not accept the cross, they would fear such persecution only if they were being identified with gentile Christians, either by a disapproving secular society or by other non-Christian Jews. Neither of these latter scenarios proves compelling.

In the first scenario, Jews might fear, e.g., that gentile Christians' cross-based claims to Jewish identity would lead the Romans to revoke the Jews' traditional religious privileges. Such persecution, however, would threaten the gentile Christians as well, yet Paul seems to limit the threat of persecution to the

20 Contra Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 178–79, who understand Paul's argument as instead urging Hellenistic Israelites in the diaspora to resist the pressure to follow specifically Judean Israelite customs. Their conclusion stems from the observation that “Paul's proclamation was Israelite-specific in all of its dimensions” (12; cf. 14, 23) and Paul's purported identification of the Galatians (“we”) in 2:15 as “‘Judeans by nature’ and not sinners of non-Israelite origin” (200). This reading of 2:15 awkwardly requires that Paul switches to “the non-Israelite name [i.e., ‘Judeans’] for Israelites” (200) immediately after the necessarily more limited, “insider” use of Ἰουδαῖος/Ἰουδαϊκῶς to refer specifically to Judeans in 2:13–14. More importantly, since the Jesus movement did spread relatively quickly to gentiles and since the church has consistently associated Paul with this extension, Malina and Pilch need to establish not just that we *can* read Paul as an apostle to [the non-Judean Israelites among] the nations, but that we *should*. Simply observing that his gospel derived from and concerned Israelite traditions cannot justify such a massive rereading of the evidence since the traditional understanding of Paul's gospel and mission already incorporates and accounts for these Israelite features.

agitators (“so that . . . *they* might not be persecuted”).²¹ The earlier characterization of the circumcision gospel as removing the “stumbling block of the cross” that causes persecution (5:11) also suggests that persecution for the cross comes from Jews (cf. 1 Cor 1:23).

Mark Nanos therefore argues for the second scenario, suggesting that the gentile Christians’ desire for acceptance from the local Jewish community drives the crisis: fearing persecution from conservative Jewish leaders, non-Christian Jews refuse to accept the gentile Christians fully into the community without the gentiles’ being circumcised.²² Paul’s wording renders this suggestion unlikely: non-Christian Jewish agitators would require circumcision not because they feared persecution by Jewish “social control agents”²³ but because they themselves regarded circumcision as a necessary component of Jewish identity. To criticize their motivation as a fear of persecution would therefore substitute a blatantly artificial accusation for the more obvious and compelling criticism that their position simply fails to take account of the cross.²⁴

Identifying the agitators as Christians both eliminates these problems and integrates well with the letter’s other instances of διώκω, all of which refer to Jewish persecution of (Jewish) Christians (1:13, 23; 4:29; 5:11). Furthermore, the contrast between the agitators’ “boasting” in the Galatians’ flesh (6:13) and Paul’s “boasting” in the cross (6:14) seems to draw its argumentative force from the two parties’ supposedly shared Christian outlook. The traditional scenario in which Paul accuses Jewish Christian agitators of seeking to avoid persecution from non-Christian Jews thus best explains the argument in 6:12, a conclusion finding further support in the portrayal of the agitators’ message as

21 So, e.g., Robert Jewett, “The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation,” *NTS* 17 (1971): 198–212, 203; Nanos, *Irony*, 219–20.

22 Nanos, *Irony*, 219–24, esp. 222–23. See also pp. 284–316 on 1:6–7, which Nanos regards as ironic. Cf. Nikolaus Walter, “Paulus und die Gegner des Christevangeliums in Galatien,” in *L’apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style, et conception du ministère* (ed. A. Vanhoye; BETL 73; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 351–56, who identifies the agitators as part of a Jewish “countermission” (Gegenmission). Nanos reaches his conclusion in part because he assumes that Paul’s accusation in 6:12 accurately reflects the agitators’ conscious motives (221–22). The need for Paul to justify (γάρ, 6:13) his accusation, however, identifies 6:12 as a controversial claim that the agitators would likely dispute.

23 Nanos, *Irony*, 223.

24 Even if non-Christian Jewish agitators did fear persecution by other Jews, the persecution would not be because of the cross—an object whose significance the agitators do not acknowledge in this scenario—but because of the gentiles’ uncircumcision.

a different “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) that effectively distorts “the gospel of Christ” in 1:6–7.²⁵

Galatians 6:13 then helps establish these agitators as naturally born Jews rather than gentile Christian proselytes. Although Emanuel Hirsch argues that the present tense description of the agitators as οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13 best fits the situation of recently circumcised gentile Christians—i.e., “those being circumcised [as part of this gentile movement]” (cf. 5:12)—the present tense need not imply this conclusion.²⁶ Robert Jewett, for instance, notes that reading περιτεμνόμενοι as a present middle causative participle instead would accurately reflect the agitators’ present advocacy of circumcision.²⁷ Given this ambiguity in the participle’s significance, the logic of 6:12–13 renders a reference to recent gentile proselytes unlikely, as I will now explain.

Since the claim that οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι “do not themselves keep the law” (6:13) does not relate directly to the agitators’ proposed motivation of avoiding persecution in 6:12, it most likely justifies (γάρ) the preceding assertion by attacking the agitators’ ostensible motive for preaching circumcision. This observation in turn suggests that the agitators promoted circumcision based on the necessity of law observance, a motivation that their failure to keep the law in 6:13 would then expose as insincere. A failure to keep the law, however, does not thereby invalidate the desire or need to keep it. Galatians 6:13 therefore truly justifies 6:12—i.e., truly exposes the agitators’ professed motive for preaching circumcision as insincere—only if the agitators *intentionally* disregard at least part of the law, a hard case to make for gentile proselytes who had recently undergone the painful process of circumcision, or even for traditional Jews. Conversely, Paul could legitimately make this charge against Christian Jews since, according to his gospel, they had to have died to the law (2:19) in order to

25 So, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), xcv.

26 Emanuel Hirsch, “Zwei Fragen zu Galater 6,” *ZNW* 29 (1930): 192–97, 193. Cf. A. E. Harvey, “The Opposition to Paul,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 321–33, 326; Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. Clarke Frank; Richmond: John Knox, 1959), 87–89; Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (SNTSMS 10; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 88–89. The suggestion of Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 352–54, that οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι designates the Galatians who receive circumcision rather than the agitators themselves falters in that οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι seems to serve as the grammatical subject of the following θέλουσιν, a verb that clearly refers to the agitators.

27 Jewett, “Agitators,” 202–3.

unite with the cursed-under-law Christ (3:13). In other words, Jewish incorporation into Christ involves the implicit acknowledgment that the law no longer applies (2:18; cf. 2:15–16).²⁸ Accordingly, however we understand the precise nuance of περιτεμνόμενοι,²⁹ the argument in 6:12–13 suggests that the participle characterizes Christian Jews rather than recent gentile proselytes.

The traditional understanding of the agitators as Jewish Christians therefore seems correct. The consistency with which Paul refers to the agitators in the third person, distinguishing them from the Galatians (“you”) and never addressing them directly,³⁰ suggests that they represent an outside group rather than a homegrown opposition. Paul’s use of the present tense to portray their actions in the community (ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς, 4:17; ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, 6:12; cf. 6:13) and to characterize them as troublemakers (τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς, 1:7 / ὁ . . . ταρασσὼν ὑμᾶς, 5:10) and agitators (οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς, 5:12) then further suggests that he assumes their continued presence in the Galatian churches.³¹

As for the Galatians themselves, they have apparently found the agitators’ arguments rather compelling (cf. 1:6–7; 3:1; 4:21; 5:7–8).³² Their attitude toward Paul also seems to have changed. Although they had originally received him “as an angel from God,” even “as Christ Jesus” himself (4:14), Paul senses that they have now become hostile to him: “Where, then, is your blessing?³³ . . . Have I become your enemy [ἐχθρός] by speaking truth to you?” (4:15–16).³⁴ Combined with the letter’s fierce rhetoric (e.g., 1:8–9; 5:12), these last two observations

28 See the fuller discussion on pp. 114–22.

29 For the various ways of interpreting περιτεμνόμενοι and its variant περιτετμημένοι, see Nanos, *Irony*, 234–35; Richardson, *Israel*, 85–87. The proposed significance of 6:13 pertains even if the perfect participle περιτετμημένοι constitutes the original reading.

30 For problems with the suggestion of Troy W. Martin, “Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatian Controversy,” *JBL* 114 (1995): 437–61, that 4:21–5:6 addresses the agitators (450–51), see pp. 300–301 below.

31 Stanley, “Curse,” 489. Nikolaus Walter suggests that Paul does not view the agitators as present when the Galatian churches assemble since he does not address them directly and vigorously warns against their influence (“Paulus,” 355), a view that supports Walter’s claim of Jewish opposition. Even this reading, however, still allows for the agitators’ presence in the area—just not in the Christian assembly—and the lack of direct address could simply signify that Paul does not know the agitators and/or does not feel the same level of responsibility for them as he does for the Galatian Christians.

32 See, e.g., Barclay, “Mirror-Reading,” 88.

33 Whether ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν refers to the Galatians’ blessing of Paul or to their sense of being blessed by him, the question indicates a perceived shift in their attitude toward him.

34 So, e.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 419.

make it difficult to see how the agitators could have viewed Paul favorably.³⁵ After all, given the Galatians' favorable inclination toward this new teaching, why would they now see Paul as their enemy (4:16) if the agitators had presented themselves as allies who were simply completing his work (cf. 3:3)?

Paul himself appears to attribute this shift in affection to an allegation of the agitators, an allegation that we can discern through the practice of "mirror-reading." John Barclay defines "mirror-reading" as the attempt to use a polemical text "as a *mirror* in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack."³⁶ He rightly notes the difficulties inherent in such a method, not the least of which involves discerning which statements (if any) directly rebut an opponent's charge.³⁷ Indeed, George Lyons attributes most of the variation in scholarly reconstructions of the Galatian situation to the rather arbitrary selection of differing claims as refutations of the agitators' key positions.³⁸ Nevertheless, Paul makes claims in 1:10 and 5:11 that, because they seek to correct mischaracterizations of the apostle, do appear to have the clear character of refutations:

Gal 1:10

^aἈρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ^bἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν; ^cεἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἡρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην.

"For now am I seeking favor with people or God? ^bOr am I seeking to please people? ^cIf I were still pleasing people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

35 Contra George Howard, *Crisis in Galatia* (2d ed.; SNTSMS 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9–10; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (rev. and exp. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 113–15; Peder Borgen, "Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men," in *Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men: and Other Essays on Christian Origins* (Trondheim, Norway: Tapir, 1983), 37–46, 39. With regard to the letter's fierce rhetoric, Watson's suggestion that Paul would adopt such a polemical tone simply "to make it unambiguously clear that he *does* oppose [the agitators], that he *does not* regard their activity as the completion and fulfillment of his own" (emphasis original) vastly understates the intent of a polemic that actively curses its opponents (1:8–9) and wishes for their castration (5:12). Cf. Philip F. Esler, *Galatians* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1998), 71, who notes the improbability that people in the ancient world would have questioned Paul's message without also impugning him.

36 Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 73–74.

37 Barclay identifies four primary pitfalls: undue selectivity, overinterpretation, mishandling polemics, and latching onto particular phrases or words as echoes of the opponents' vocabulary (ibid., 79–83).

38 George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 95.

Gal 5:11

ἄ ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι; ὅρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ.

^aBut as for me, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? ^bThen the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

Of the two statements, the one in 5:11 more obviously functions as a refutation: the rhetorical question in the apodosis—“why am I still persecuted?”—highlights a fatal flaw with the picture of Paul as a preacher of circumcision (cf. 5:11b). The verse as a whole thus serves to disprove the possibility put forward in the protasis.³⁹ Since Paul clearly did not preach circumcision to the Galatians, the need for him to deny his status as such a preacher provides strong evidence that the agitators had portrayed him in that way.⁴⁰

In contrast, the apodosis in 1:10c—“I would not be a slave of Christ”—does not refute the possibility put forward in its protasis so much as it highlights a troubling implication. Designating oneself as a “slave of Christ,” after all, hardly represents the kind of objective evidence that would overturn an accusation of people pleasing.⁴¹ By providing a compelling reason for Paul to avoid such behavior, however, the statement does effectively affirm his commitment to integrity in the present argument. It thus implies a negative answer to the preceding question in 1:10b, “am I seeking to please people?” The critical issue, then, is whether this affirmation of sincerity seeks to rebut a prior accusation or simply adds rhetorical flourish.

Although a few scholars deny that 1:10 responds to a claim of the agitators,⁴² contextual considerations suggest otherwise. First, the agitators would have

39 Whether the initial ἔτι implies that Paul had preached circumcision before his encounter with Christ or earlier in his Christian life—or something else altogether—need not concern us here. On the various possibilities, see Douglas A. Campbell, “Galatians 5.11: Evidence of an Early Law-observant Mission by Paul?,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 325–47.

40 Contra Jürgen Becker, “Der Brief an die Galater,” in *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser und Kolosser* (NTD 8/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 9–103, 79–80, who, finding it strange that Paul would not address such an accusation earlier in the letter, suggests that “preach circumcision” instead constitutes a Pauline antithesis to “proclaim Christ” intended to spur the Galatians to reflect on the different content of the two gospels.

41 Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 33.

42 E.g., Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 56 n. 115; Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 91–95; Jerry L. Sumney, ‘*Servants of Satan*,’ ‘*False Brothers*,’ and Other Opponents of Paul (JSNTSup 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 148–49.

to explain why, if Paul preaches circumcision (cf. 5:11), he failed to preach circumcision in Galatia. The accusation that Paul had compromised the gospel to make it more agreeable to the gentile Galatians thus fulfills a requirement of the basic scenario. Second, the threefold repetition of the rhetorical point in 1:10 gives the verse a strong polemical edge, as does the emphatic ἄρτι. Third, whether the γάρ in 1:10 has its customary causal sense (likely identifying the verse as a justification for the presupposition of 1:8–9 that Paul everywhere preaches the same gospel) or a more inferential force, it suggests that 1:10 takes Paul's present (ἄρτι; cf. 1:9) willingness to pronounce a curse on anyone—including himself—who preaches a different gospel (1:8–9) as evidence that he does not seek to please people at the expense of the gospel.⁴³ This need for 1:10 to establish his evangelistic integrity then suggests that the verse functions as a refutation. Finally, that the remainder of Gal 1–2 seeks to establish the divine, revelatory nature of Paul's law-free gospel (1:11–12; cf. 1:15–19; 2:6–10)—i.e., showing that it is not a truncated Pauline construction—and his faithfulness to it even in the face of opposition (e.g., 2:5, 11–14) also supports this scenario.⁴⁴

The agitators thus seem to have portrayed Paul as someone who prized pleasing people over the truth of the gospel. Their own advocacy of the circumcision gospel and the extended defense of the law-free gospel's revelatory nature in Gal 1–2 indicate that they interpreted his preaching of the law-free gospel in this way: Paul refrained from telling the Galatians about the circumcision requirement because he wanted to make the gospel easier for them to accept.⁴⁵ His purported preaching of circumcision (cf. 5:11) would accordingly

43 So Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, "Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Galatians," in *Galatians and Ephesians* (Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament 7; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 1–275, 20: "explanatory justification (γάρ) of the harsh language [in 1:8–9]."

44 For the problems with traditional views that interpret Gal 1–2—and the programmatic 1:11–12 in particular—as primarily defending Paul's apostleship and his relationship (or lack thereof) to Jerusalem, see Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 83–91; Bernard Lategan, "Is Paul Defending His Apostleship in Galatians? The Function of Galatians 1.11–12 and 2.19–20 in the Development of Paul's Argument," *NTS* 34 (1988): 411–30.

45 A few scholars identify Paul's purported preaching of circumcision as the people-pleasing compromise, a conclusion that requires distancing the charge from the circumcision-advocating agitators. E.g., Ropes appeals to the identification's improbability as evidence that Paul faces a second oppositional party (*Singular Problem*, 21–22), an unlikely scenario given the lack of explicit differentiation in Paul's argument. Borgen, "Circumcision," 41–42, in contrast, argues for the identification by suggesting that "people pleasing" represents Paul's own negative characterization of the agitators' positive-but-mistaken endorsement

prove the compromised nature of his law-free gospel.⁴⁶ This alleged duplicity then accounts for the Galatians' newfound hostility in 4:15–16: they believe that Paul lied to them, that he knowingly presented them with a truncated—i.e., false—gospel. That the Galatians could believe him capable of such duplicity explains Paul's perplexity and his desire to be with them in 4:20. Surely, he seems to say, he has misunderstood the situation; if only he were present with them he would be able to change his tone (ἀλλάξει τὴν φωνήν μου, 4:20).

Paul might indeed have an inaccurate grasp of the actual circumstances in Galatia, but it is that potentially inaccurate grasp that nevertheless shapes his understanding of the task at hand. In short, he needs to refute the rather compelling arguments of the still-present Jewish Christian agitators so as to persuade the presently hostile gentile Galatian Christians to return to the true gospel. Even when interpreters recognize this situation, they still often fail to appreciate the rhetorical demands that it imposes, demands that Paul would no doubt have felt keenly given his conviction that a failure to persuade would effectively bring his labor among the Galatians to naught (4:11; cf. 3:4). We must accordingly ask: in light of this situation, what type(s) of argument would Paul consider likely to persuade the Galatians?

An argument that accords with Paul's persuasive intent should account for two factors in particular. First, so far as Paul knows, the agitators remain with the Galatians. They will accordingly enjoy the last word in the debate, having the freedom to rebut the letter's arguments and reassert their own understanding of the gospel with relative impunity. Furthermore, the agitators have

of him as a preacher of circumcision. The defense of Paul's law-free gospel in Gal 1–2 undermines this latter suggestion.

- 46 E.g., Munck, *Paul*, 90. Munck couples this interpretation, as many scholars do, with the more problematical claim that the agitators also accused Paul of dependence on Jerusalem. For the view that the agitators portrayed Paul's preaching of circumcision as equally tainted, see Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 48, 240. Fung glosses the phrase "preach circumcision" as "not discountenancing the practice of circumcision among Jewish Christians" (240). This interpretation can appeal to 1 Cor 9:20–23 for support—"I became to the Jews as a Jew so that I might win Jews"—but, as the awkwardness of Fung's gloss highlights, the concept of "preaching circumcision" relates more naturally to the context of a gentile mission where it would be a live question. That the agitators would regard such preaching of the, from their perspective, true gospel to Jews as insincere also seems unlikely. D. W. B. Robinson therefore presents a stronger case for this view by suggesting that the accusation derives from Paul's formerly allowing *gentiles* to express their Christian liberty by voluntarily becoming circumcised to please *Jews* ("The Circumcision of Titus, and Paul's 'Liberty,'" *ABR* 12 (1964): 24–42, 36).

successfully marginalized Paul's gospel once already. He therefore needs an argument robust enough to withstand a knowledgeable and skilled rebuttal.⁴⁷ In this respect, regardless of whether or not the agitators introduced Abraham into the discussion, scholarly reconstructions of the agitators' purported Abrahamic argument⁴⁸ provide a helpful gauge for understanding the position that Paul's argument must ultimately overcome.

Second, the agitators—not Paul—currently enjoy the Galatians' favor. Even if one questions the specific reconstruction offered above, the apologetic nature of Gal 1–2 suggests that Paul understands the agitators to have in some way impugned his gospel and, thus, his authority. The lack-of-blessing / “enemy” language in 4:15–16 would then seem to portray the Galatians as no better than neutral in their attitude toward Paul. Paul therefore cannot expect the Galatians to accept any conclusions based solely on his apostolic authority.⁴⁹ Moreover, although modern scholars—especially those who look to Paul for an authoritative articulation of their shared faith—often grant him the benefit of the doubt in trying to make sense of his argument, we have no indication that he would have expected the same courtesy from his original audience. He cannot assume that the Galatians would puzzle over his meaning through multiple readings and in-depth study. That is to say, he cannot assume that he has more than one shot to make a compelling case for the truth of his gospel and the inadequacy of the agitators' position.

Paul therefore needs a compelling argument that is both 1) easily comprehended by the gentile Galatians and 2) resistant to easy refutation by the Jewish agitators. At a very basic level, then, we should expect a straightforwardly coherent argument; otherwise, the agitators could refute it simply by pointing out inconsistencies and/or logical problems. Furthermore, we would expect Paul to ground his argument in a logic accessible to the gentile Galatians. The standard propositional and syllogistic formulations of Aristotelian and Stoic

47 If, as Stanley, “Curse,” 489, suggests, Paul's vague references to the agitators—he refers to them as “certain ones” (τινές, 1:7), twice asks “who” (τίς) has bewitched (3:1) / hindered (5:7) the Galatians, and dismisses the one troubling them as “whoever he is” (ὅστις ἐάν ᾧ, 5:10)—indicate his ignorance as to their identity and, thus, the weaknesses of his rhetorical adversaries, then the need for a robust argument only increases. Paul could, however, simply use these vague terms to belittle the agitators.

48 See, e.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 303–6.

49 Significantly, Paul does not reassert the privileges of such authority until the end of the letter, i.e., until he has already reestablished the trustworthiness of his gospel on other grounds: “From now on, let no one make trouble for me, for I bear the scars of Christ in my body” (6:17).

logic,⁵⁰ e.g., accordingly seem more likely to shape his argument than implicit appeals to peculiarly Jewish forms of reasoning such as midrashic or rabbinic logic. Interpretations that invoke rare meanings of words seem similarly unlikely to reflect Paul's intended argument.

These two criteria also limit the way in which a potentially persuasive argument could presume upon shared knowledge. To the extent that the argument relies on unstated premises or steps, these presumed elements should be both obvious to the Galatians (lest they lose Paul's train of thought) and fundamentally acceptable to all involved (lest the agitators refute Paul's conclusions as unwarranted). The first point diminishes the attraction of interpretations requiring that the gentile Galatians supply information from, e.g., Jewish apocalyptic thought, a body of thought with which they seem unlikely to have been very familiar. The second casts doubt upon attempts to ground perceived logical leaps in implicit appeals to Paul's former teachings, i.e., teachings that the agitators have already succeeded in calling into question. Of course, the Galatians would presumably remember at least the broad outlines and major emphases of his gospel. Paul's prior teachings thus form an important background against which he could expect the Galatians to hear his letter. Nevertheless, a step-by-step argument building from first principles would have a much better chance of success than an argument where crucial steps depend on the Galatians' ability and willingness to supply detailed information that they may have forgotten, rejected, or never known in the first place.⁵¹

Scriptural citations and allusions—which appear especially frequently in Gal 3:6–14—present a special type of appeal to shared knowledge.⁵² Scholars have increasingly sought to explain portions of Paul's argument by appealing to the original context of his scriptural citations. While New Testament authors can and do use citations to evoke larger narratives and patterns, it seems an

50 On logic in the ancient world, see Moisés Mayordomo, *Argumentiert Paulus logisch? Eine Analyse vor dem Hintergrund antiker Logik* (WUNT 188; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 27–90.

51 Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 836, observes that the Galatians' "prolonged exposure to [Paul's] teaching"—including a likely second visit (cf. τὸ πρότερον, 4:13)—would enable Paul to "presuppose a great deal of information." Even granting this observation, the Galatians' current distrust of Paul's gospel and the agitators' ability to refute his position temper the degree to which we would therefore expect an argument characterized by "concise," "abbreviated allusion," especially with regard to potentially controversial points.

52 For critical examination of typical scholarly assumptions regarding Paul's biblical citations, including issues of access to texts, study habits, and likely scriptural familiarity/competency of a Pauline congregation, see Stanley, *Arguing*, 40–60.

improbable strategy for Paul to employ in Galatians given the intensely polemical context. That is to say, he seems unlikely to stake the Galatians' fate on their desire and ability to intuit such complex arguments, especially since we have no reason to suspect that they would have been sufficiently familiar with Israel's scriptures for such evocations to work. Both Paul's references to their pagan past (4:8–10) and his claim to have evangelized them due to an infirmity (4:13)⁵³—significantly, not because they heard him preaching in a synagogue (as, e.g., in Acts 13:43; 14:1; 17:1–4, 10–12; 18:4)—argue against understanding the Galatians as synagogue-attending God-fearers before their conversion.⁵⁴ Their understanding of the scriptures would therefore have to have come from Paul's teachings, teachings that, as noted above, Paul would presumably want to justify and explain rather than assume.⁵⁵

At the same time, however, Paul would also need to make sure that the significance he attributes to his scriptural citations conforms to their original context. The agitators would surely have little trouble refuting arguments that depended on misquotations or misapplications of scripture: they would need only to read (or cite from memory if texts were not available) the quoted verse in its original context to expose such misappropriations.⁵⁶ Accordingly, to have the best chance at persuasion, an argument would need to cite scripture in such a way that Paul's point would be clear even to those with little scriptural knowledge while its validity would be clear even to those with extensive

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- 53 Lit., “a weakness of the flesh.” Troy W. Martin, “Whose Flesh? What Temptation? (Galatians 4:13–14),” *JSNT* 74 (1999): 65–91, relates the phrase to the Galatians' uncircumcised state, with Paul's circumcised flesh then constituting the potential temptation for disdaining in 4:14 (78). According to Paul's gospel, however, an uncircumcised state does *not* represent a weakness of the flesh, making this reading of ἀσθενεῖαν τῆς σαρκὸς an odd concession to the agitators' position as well as an odd way of characterizing Paul's reason for evangelizing.
- 54 Contra Harvey, “Opposition,” 325, who suggests that Paul's arguments “could only have been followed by Gentiles who were already well grounded in the Old Testament and in Jewish methods of scriptural exegesis.”
- 55 Cf. Stanley, *Arguing*, 64: “[E]ven where Paul had taught his audiences personally from the Jewish scriptures (as in Galatia and Corinth), he could not be certain how much they would recall from his earlier instruction, and he had no way of knowing precisely which passages they had discussed in his absence.”
- 56 Stanley notes that we cannot assume Pauline congregations would have had access to biblical scrolls (*ibid.*, 41–43). The agitators, however, could have brought scrolls with them (cf. 2 Tim 4:13), and different congregations in Galatia might have had access to different scrolls, meaning that Paul's safest course would be to make arguments that neither assumed nor hoped to avoid such access.

scriptural knowledge.⁵⁷ In other words, the significance that Paul attributes to a citation should ideally agree with but not depend on its original context.

To conclude, given Paul's understanding of the rhetorical situation, a potentially persuasive argument would be an argument that the gentile Galatians could easily comprehend and the Jewish agitators could not easily refute. It should therefore cohere logically in both part and whole, use language in a straightforward manner, and explicitly articulate its crucial steps. It should not make implicit appeals to Jewish literature / thought or Jewish forms of reasoning with which Paul's gentile audience would likely be unfamiliar. Finally, the scriptural appeals in such an argument should be both eminently clear and exegetically reasonable. I could perhaps add other characteristics as well, but this discussion hopefully suffices to establish the basic way in which Paul's persuasive intent functions as an evaluative criterion.

Once again, we cannot simply assume that Paul's argument will always conform to this ideal any more than we can assume that the presence of such an argument would necessarily persuade the Galatians. Paul might, for instance, lapse into a particularly Jewish way of reasoning without realizing that the gentile Galatians might have difficulty following his argument. At every step, then, we will have to examine the actual argument to see how closely it approaches this ideal. Given the aforementioned indications that the letter contains a potentially persuasive argument, however, I do suggest that, as a general principle, we should prefer interpretations that conform more closely to this standard. Furthermore, even if we ultimately conclude that Paul does not present a potentially persuasive argument, foregrounding the issue still provides a helpful check against interpretations where it seems not to have factored at all.

J. Louis Martyn provides perhaps the preeminent illustration of this need for a criterion of persuasive intent, if only because his grasp of the rhetorical situation seems so promising. Martyn rightly notes, e.g., the controversy's high stakes ("life-and-death crisis") and the agitators' ability to refute Paul's arguments.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he strongly resists the idea that Paul would seek to persuade his audience rhetorically:

because Paul's rhetoric presupposes God's action through Paul's words, this rhetoric proves to be more revelatory and performative than hortatory and persuasive, although it is both. . . . To take an example, in writing

57 On the interpretive implications of the probable variation in scriptural literacy among Paul's audience members—including a fourfold "typology of possible audience reactions to Paul's biblical quotations"—see Stanley (*ibid.*, 66–68).

58 Martyn, *Galatians*, 42.

this letter, Paul is not at all formulating an argument designed to persuade the Galatians that faith is better than observance of the Law. He is constructing an announcement designed to wake the Galatians up to the real cosmos.⁵⁹

Martyn thus contends that the letter constitutes more of a reproclamation of the gospel than a piece of persuasive rhetoric.

Regardless of whether or not Martyn correctly classifies Galatians as kerygmatic proclamation, the letter clearly makes arguments. It puts forth premises and draws conclusions. While I agree that Paul understands the effectiveness of his gospel to depend on divine empowering and illumination rather than rhetorical sophistry, I also see no reason why the apostle would therefore purposely make bad arguments. Nor do I suggest that Martyn intends this implication: his comments serve primarily to highlight the “limits to the pertinence of [formal] rhetorical analysis.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Martyn interprets Paul’s argument in, e.g., 3:6–10, as begging the question (3:6–7), employing faulty syllogisms (3:8–9), and abusing scripture (3:10).⁶¹ I find it highly unlikely that Paul would expect anyone to follow such convoluted and illogical arguments, let alone find them more compelling than the agitators’ purported alternative reading of the Abrahamic evidence.

In short, I suggest that Martyn’s analysis goes astray because his Paul does not engage in the very task that Martyn himself rightly encourages later interpreters to do, namely, putting himself in the place of the Galatian congregation. In other words, Martyn’s Paul does not seem to have considered what kind of arguments the Galatians might find persuasive in the given situation. Surely a Paul who found his Galatian “children” (4:19) in danger of being severed from Christ (5:4) would offer a more compelling defense of his maligned gospel! As the following chapters of this book will document, however, Martyn hardly stands alone in proposing such problematical readings.

59 Ibid., 23.

60 Ibid., 21. He even claims that “Paul is free to use all the rhetorical skill he can muster, taking every stratagem captive to Christ, so as to preach the gospel itself in the form of an evangelical argument” (148).

61 See Part I.

Identifying a Coherent Model of Abrahamic Descent that Accords with Paul's Persuasive Intent

This book contends that Paul does indeed present the Galatians with a coherent account of Abrahamic descent, one that accords with his persuasive intent of refuting the agitators' call for law-based circumcision. Its key insight lies in the suggestion that Paul presents the Abrahamic διαθήκη in 3:15–18 as a Hellenistic adoptive testament, an interpretive possibility that was soon lost when the letter moved into cultural contexts that did not recognize testamentary adoption. When read as an adoptive testament, the διαθήκη requires that the promised Abrahamic seed be a naturally born son of both Abraham and, because of Abraham's divine adoption, God. This reading thus explains Paul's identification of the incarnate Christ as Abraham's sole seed (3:16).

This twofold understanding of the Abrahamic seed further suggests that we should distinguish Paul's other terms for Abrahamic descent.⁶² I accordingly argue that “sons of Abraham” in 3:7 designates, as it typically did in the mid-first century CE, the Jews, i.e., those physical descendants of Abraham who also share his faith. In contrast, “children of promise” in 4:28 designates gentiles who have through faith received the Abrahamic blessing, i.e., the Spirit of sonship that makes them children of God.⁶³ Each group thus requires incorporation into Christ to establish their status as Abrahamic seed, but they require it for different reasons. The Jews require incorporation so that they might share in the gentiles' divine sonship; the gentiles require incorporation so that they might share in the Jews' Abrahamic sonship. The resulting union of Jew and gentile in Christ—the union, that is, of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God—then constitutes the single divine Abrahamic seed who inherits (3:29).

This interdependent model of Abrahamic descent grounds Paul's argument against the gentile Christians' submission to the Jewish law. Contrary to popular interpretations, however, his argument repeatedly focuses on the position of *Jewish* Christians. That is to say, Paul uses each image of Abrahamic descent to establish that the Jewish Christians have themselves already left the law behind to rejoin the nations. In essence, then, 3:6–14, 3:15–4:11, and 4:21–5:1 all re-pose the fundamental question first asked of Peter in 2:14: “If you, being a

62 For a rare voice acknowledging the potential distinctions in these terms, see Yon-Gyong Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians: Rethinking Paul's Response to the Crisis in Galatia* (WUNT 2 / 183; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 80.

63 The gentiles' union with the Jewish sons of Abraham in Christ is what actually makes them *Abrahamic* children of promise.

Jew, live like a gentile and not like a Jew, how is it that you compel the gentiles to Judaize?" The implication is clear: if Jewish Christians are no longer under the law, then gentile Christians certainly have no reason to embrace law observance.

To establish this overall argument, the book proceeds in three parts, with each part analyzing a particular image of Abrahamic descent in its context: sons in 3:6–14 (Part I, Chps. 2–3),⁶⁴ seed in 3:15–4:11 (Part II, Chps. 4–6), and children of promise in 4:21–5:1 (Part III, Chps. 7–8). The first chapter of each part establishes the relevance—or lack thereof in the case of Part I—of adoption for the respective passage's portrayal of Abrahamic descent. Highlighting the resulting interdependence of Jew and gentile, the latter chapter(s) of each part then show how each Abrahamic image fits into its section's larger argument against the gentiles' submission to Jewish law. A final chapter summarizes the results and highlights some of the key implications.

Although the focus lies on establishing the coherent theological content in Paul's argument, the appeal to Paul's persuasive intent as a guide to discerning that content requires that I also consider the various rhetorical strategies that he employs. Rather than seeking to classify the arguments according to particular rhetorical models or categories, however, I instead employ a text-based approach that seeks simply to articulate the logic of Paul's arguments.⁶⁵ As the ensuing pages will show, the reading of Galatians that emerges reveals a coherent and robust model of Abrahamic descent that stands independently of the agitators' arguments and suggests new solutions to such thorny Pauline issues as the relationship of Jews and gentiles in Christ and the purpose of the law.

64 Given that Paul's argument concerns circumcision and inheritance—i.e., two issues where a person's sex mattered in the ancient world—this book retains the language of "sons" and "sonship."

65 For defense of a similar text-based approach to Paul's rhetoric, see D. Francois Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter* (WUNT 2 / 190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 24–28. Tolmie notes several problems with the alternative, oft-employed strategy of seeking to apply a particular rhetorical system to Paul's argument: the frequent "stretching" of the model to fit the data; the lack of a unified rhetorical system in antiquity; the reliance on rhetorical handbooks as guides to evaluating rather than composing speeches; and our ignorance of any formal rhetorical training on Paul's part.

PART 1

Sons (Gal 3:6–14)

“These are sons of Abraham”

GAL 3:7



The Jews as the Faith-Based Sons of Abraham in Gal 3:6–7

Overview of Sons

Paul first introduces Abraham and the concept of Abrahamic descent into the argument of Galatians through a citation of Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6–7:

Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” [Gen 15:6], so you know that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, these are sons of Abraham.

According to Hans Dieter Betz, these two verses establish the “exegetical thesis” that Paul seeks to prove in 3:6–14 through a series of scriptural appeals, namely, that “[t]he sons of the ‘believer’ Abraham are the Christians [i.e., Jews and gentiles] who believe like Abraham.”¹ As the concluding reference to the reception of the Spirit in 3:14b then shows, this “argument from scripture” parallels and complements the preceding argument from the Galatians’ experience of the Spirit in 3:1–5. Experience and scripture thus agree on the legitimacy and sufficiency of the gentiles’ faith apart from Torah.²

While scholars differ on details, Betz’s basic suggestion that 3:6–14 serves to induct the gentiles into Abraham’s family based on faith alone stands as the almost axiomatic conclusion of interpreters stretching back as far as the earliest extant complete commentary on Galatians (John Chrysostom, ca. 400).³ In fact, most ancient and modern interpreters view the series of scriptural arguments in 3:6–14 primarily as a defense of this Christian sonship of Abraham. Having established this premise in 3:6–7—so the argument goes—Paul explicitly shows in 3:8–9 that these ἐκ πίστεως (i.e., “Christian”) sons who receive Abraham’s blessing include gentiles. He then follows this positive argument for the inclusion of gentiles with a negative argument in 3:10–12 that essentially pits blessed Christian faith against cursed Jewish law observance so as to exclude Jews who do not believe in Jesus. Finally, 3:13–14 explains how Christ

1 Betz, *Galatians*, 138, 31.

2 Ibid., 31, 138–39.

3 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Galatas commentarius* (PG 61.650–653).

makes this blessed sonship available to everyone through the atonement wrought on the cross. The whole argument accordingly demonstrates how redefining Abrahamic sonship based on faith in/of Christ allows Torah-free gentiles to qualify as full members of Abraham's family.

At the same time, modern scholars also largely agree on the rather arbitrary nature of the exegesis in this so-called argument from scripture. Many admit its problematical nature outright, often trying to salvage Paul's apparently poor logic by appealing to his need to respond to the agitators' arguments.⁴ Even the more restrained critiques typically include the caveat that we must judge Paul's exegetical moves based on first-century standards and not modern historical-critical practice,⁵ a tacit admission that this argument has difficulties. These appeals to first-century standards then highlight the additional problem that this perceived argument makes little sense in the context of first-century Jewish covenantal nomism, which understood law observance as a grateful and faithful response to God's prior grace.

Part I of this book argues that the logic of this passage appears so problematical because the traditional interpretation of Abrahamic sonship in 3:6–14 fundamentally misreads both Paul's intent and his argument. To be sure, 3:8–13 does function largely as an argument from scripture (although not in the way typically described), and 3:8–10 does provide a scriptural basis for the gentiles' experience of the Spirit in 3:1–5. These elements, however, are only pieces of the larger argument in 3:6–14, an argument that actually has nothing to do with the gentiles' Abrahamic sonship.

The problem often begins when scholars understand 3:1–5 as an experiential appeal that should prove the sufficiency of the gentile Galatians' faith.⁶ In truth, 3:1–5 decisively proves this point only if one accepts Paul's dichotomy between faith and law observance. It is on precisely this point, however, that the agitators would presumably balk. Rather than distinguishing law and faith, the agitators more likely espoused the standard Jewish view that true faith must ultimately find expression in works of law, i.e., in doing what God had instructed his people to do. The key dispute in Galatians is accordingly not whether justification comes through faith or law observance but whether

4 Examples noted throughout.

5 E.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 137–38; Ben Witherington, III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 218; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 110.

6 E.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 136; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 151; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 99.

justifying faith must find expression in works of Jewish law.⁷ Paul's argument must therefore establish—not presuppose—a distinction between faith and law.⁸

This need to differentiate faith from law observance explains why Paul points to the Galatians' initial reception of the Spirit in 3:2: he establishes common ground by highlighting an occurrence for which all the involved parties would acknowledge the distinction. After all, no one would claim that the gentile Galatians received the Spirit because of their faithful adherence to Jewish law. Paul even foregrounds the division by opposing active works of law not just to "faith" but to the "hearing of faith" (ἀκοῆς πίστεως, 3:2; cf. 3:5), a phrase that appears only in Gal 3:2–5 in the Pauline corpus. The seemingly benign claim in 3:2 would surely provoke protest, however, when 3:3–5 goes on to imply that this initial distinction between works of law and the hearing of faith continues into the Galatians' present and beyond. Defending the continuation of this distinction thus constitutes the burden of 3:6–14, a burden that Paul meets by invoking Abraham.

The argument in 3:6–14 achieves this goal through four steps. Galatians 3:6–7 first reminds the readers that Abraham's true sons must be justified by their faith, a statement every good Jew could affirm. In 3:8–10, Paul next argues from the Abrahamic promise to bless the nations that God similarly justifies the nations/gentiles based on faith. Because they receive this blessing as gentiles, however, this faith does not—indeed, cannot—involve law observance. Given this distinction, 3:11–12 then affirms that the Jews' justification also ultimately rests on their faith and not their works of law. Having carefully established each point, Paul concludes the argument in 3:13–14 with a christological twist on the preceding steps: Christ's accursed death enables the Jews to rejoin the nations by transgressing the law into Christ, thereby qualifying them to receive the promised Abrahamic blessing.

7 Significantly, Paul does not target works in general, hence, I suggest, his reticence to use the "hearing of faith" language outside of Gal 3:1–5. Galatians 5:6 even claims that what matters is faith *working* (ἐνεργουμένη) through love. So Paul agrees with the agitators that faith must find concrete expression. He differs, however, in maintaining that Christian faith does not find expression in observance of the Jewish law. The critical question is therefore not whether or not Christians need works to supplement/show their faith but whether or not gentile Christians must become Jews. See, e.g., Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976), 16–23.

8 Suggestions that the agitators promoted the law as a necessary addition to faith (e.g., In-Gyu Hong, "Does Paul Misrepresent the Jewish Law? Law and Covenant in Gal 3:1–14," *NovT* 36 [1994]: 164–82, 182), therefore posit a largely anachronistic distinction.

The christological twist in 3:13–14 therefore shifts the expression of justifying faith that, according to 3:6–7, establishes Abrahamic sonship from observing the law to transgressing it. In other words, 3:6–14 effectively redefines *Jewish* Abrahamic sonship according to the model of Christ, who expresses his justifying faith, as Isaac once did, in getting up “on the wood,” trusting that his Father would see him through death to life. Exhibiting this faith of Christ, i.e., this willingness to embrace the curse of the cross, then becomes the defining characteristic of Jewish Abrahamic sonship: it proves them worthy of their forefather’s example and enables them to receive the blessing that comes to the nations, i.e., the Spirit.⁹ Hence, in the type of counterintuitive reversal characteristic of the gospel, Jews become full sons of Abraham only by abandoning their perceived status as sons of Abraham.

This treatment of the Jews’ Abrahamic sonship serves Paul’s larger argumentative purpose. If Jewish Christians have effectively died to the law and become “gentile sinners” (cf. 2:15–20), then the distinction between faith and Jewish law observance in 3:2 continues. The gentile Galatians accordingly have no incentive to submit to a law that Jewish Christians have themselves already abandoned, in effect if not in practice.

As he does throughout this letter, Paul thus makes his case about the gentile Christians by pointing to the Jewish Christians. He can proceed in this way because of the interdependence of Jews and gentiles in Christ, a theme that 3:6–14 begins to develop. The gentiles receive the blessing because of promises made to the Jewish patriarch. The Jews receive the blessing because it comes to the gentiles. Both groups therefore owe their receipt of Abraham’s blessing to the other group.

Part I argues that this overall reading of Paul’s argument makes better sense of the text, resolves the problems inherent in more traditional interpretations, and results in an argument that actually has a chance of persuading the Galatians. The remainder of this chapter looks at the logic of 3:6–7, arguing that these verses do not effectively adopt gentiles as Abrahamic sons but instead describe the Jews’ Abrahamic sonship. Chapter 3 then shows how Paul develops the remainder of the argument in 3:6–14 around the idea of Jew-gentile interdependence.

9 As the analysis of 3:15–4:11 in Part II will show, the Spirit is what qualifies Jewish Christians as Abrahamic seed by adopting them as sons of God.

The Problem of Abrahamic Sonship in 3:6–7: Whom Does It Include?

Gal 3:6–7

ἡκαθὼς Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.
 ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσιν Ἀβραάμ.

*Ἔ*Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” [Gen 15:6], *ἔ*you know therefore that the ones [who are righteous] based on faith, these are sons of Abraham.

From his appeal to Abraham in 3:6, Paul invites his readers to “know (γινώσκετε) that the ones who are ἐκ πίστεως, these (οὗτοι) are sons of Abraham.” Two related observations affect our understanding of this claim. First, the γινώσκετε could be either indicative or imperative. Second, the unnecessary—and, hence, emphatic—οὗτοι in 3:7 gives this conclusion a clear polemical thrust: Paul is arguing that *these* are sons of Abraham. The claim thus establishes an implicit contrast with alternative understandings of Abrahamic sonship, effectively excluding anyone who is not ἐκ πίστεως.¹⁰ Determining the identity of these ἐκ πίστεως sons of Abraham therefore becomes the key to understanding the argument.

Given the surrounding discussions of gentile faith (3:1–5, 8–9) and the emphatic form of 3:7, interpreters almost always conclude that 3:7 identifies everyone who is ἐκ πίστεως as a son of Abraham. Most scholars understand this sonship to derive from the correspondence between the believers’ faith in Christ and Abraham’s example of faith; a few argue that ἐκ πίστεως instead alludes to the believers’ incorporation into Christ. Either way, the argument would effectively redefine Abrahamic sonship christologically so as to

10 So, e.g., Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 191; Kwon, *Eschatology*, 83; Richard B. Hays, “The Letter to the Galatians,” in *2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (NIB 11; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 181–348, 255; Moisés Silva, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 230. Noting the “restrictive tone,” Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 148–49, nevertheless questions whether the brevity of Paul’s argument truly fits a polemical context. The recognition that Paul here establishes a position with which even the agitators would agree—namely, that justification by faith forms an essential component of *Jewish* Abrahamic sonship—resolves the apparent discrepancy.

include gentiles. The radical nature of this redefinition would then suggest that γινώσκετε functions as an imperative inviting the readers to draw the novel conclusion.¹¹

This gentile-inclusive reading, however, must presuppose that the definition of Abrahamic sonship is already at issue. Otherwise, Paul would presumably expect the readers to understand the statement as indicating that every true son of Abraham must be ἐκ πίστεως. The similar construction in 6:12 provides an instructive parallel: “As many as desire to make a good showing in flesh, these compel you to be circumcised” (ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι). Since the Galatians obviously knew who was promoting circumcision in their midst, no one suggests that 6:12 seeks to redefine this group. Rather, the verse highlights a crucial characteristic of those who were compelling the Galatians, namely, that they desire to show well in the flesh. If 3:7 likewise assumes the stability of “sons of Abraham,” then the inference would highlight being ἐκ πίστεως as an essential characteristic of those already acknowledged to be Abrahamic sons, i.e., the Jews. In this case, γινώσκετε would likely function as an indicative, reminding the readers of something they already know.¹²

With little to no evidence suggesting that the nature of Abrahamic sonship was at issue in Galatia—apart, that is, from the interpretation of 3:7 as redefining this sonship (see below)—we have no reason to suspect that the Galatians would understand Abrahamic sonship as a concept whose definition was even up for debate.¹³ I accordingly contend that 3:6–7 highlights being ἐκ πίστεως as

11 E.g., Charles J. Ellicott, *A Commentary, Critical and Grammatical, on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, with a Revised Translation* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1865), 69; Dunn, *Galatians*, 162; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 117; Fung, *Galatians*, 138; Burton, *Galatians*, 155; Betz, *Galatians*, 141; M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul Épître aux Galates* (2d ed.; EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1950), 64; Meyer, “Galatians,” 109.

12 Although he regards 3:7 as redefining Abrahamic sonship, Longenecker opts for the indicative on the grounds that γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι constitutes a common disclosure formula in ancient Hellenistic letters (*Galatians*, 114). Cf. Stanley, “Curse,” 494; Witherington, *Grace*, 226; Martyn, *Galatians*, 299; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (1865; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 137.

13 Harvey's observation that Jews did not even extend the designation “sons of Abraham” to circumcised proselytes (“Opposition,” 327) would, if correct, provide further evidence for the fixity of Abrahamic sonship as indicating physical descent from Abraham in the first century CE (cf., e.g., Luke 19:9; *Tg. Isa.* 46:11). Harvey bases this conclusion on later rabbinic traditions (e.g., *m. Bik.* 1:4) and the implications in Philo that Jews did not allow proselytes to integrate fully (e.g., *Spec.* 1.51–52) (327 nn. 15–16). As Harvey notes,

an essential component of *Jewish* claims to Abrahamic sonship. Overturning the widespread consensus that 3:6–7 redefines Abrahamic sonship so as to include gentiles, however, requires more than a simple appeal to 6:12. To make this case, I will first differentiate 3:6–7 from the discussion of the gentiles' faith in 3:1–5 and then demonstrate that both the logic of 3:6–7 and a consideration of broader contextual and theological issues create problems for a gentile-inclusive sonship in 3:6–7. The chapter concludes by drawing these strands together to present the positive case for an exclusively Jewish sonship in 3:6–7.

Differentiating 3:6–7 from the Discussion of the Gentiles' Faith in 3:1–5

Galatians 3:6 opens with a comparative *καθώς*. The function of the verse in Paul's argument accordingly depends on the direction of the intended comparison, whether it looks back to 3:5, looks forward to 3:7, or looks both ways as a Janus verse. As Andrew Wakefield helpfully observes, if the verse looks back to 3:5, then it provides *inductive* support for the preceding argument from experience; if it instead looks forward, then the inferential *ἄρα* particle in 3:7 suggests that 3:6 functions as a premise in a *deductive* argument.¹⁴ This observation helps eliminate the option of a Janus verse:¹⁵ understanding 3:6 to function simultaneously both as an inductive example and as a premise in a deductive argument is both counterintuitive and, as I will show, unnecessary. Of the remaining options, Wakefield favors a backward-looking *καθώς* since "it is not entirely clear how the citation of Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6 might logically lead to the conclusion expressed in Gal 3:7."¹⁶ I contend, however, that 3:6 does

his observation undermines the suggestion that the agitators had introduced the issue of Abrahamic sonship in Galatia. It would also make a redefinition of sonship in 3:7 easier to refute.

- 14 Andrew H. Wakefield, *Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul's Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1–14* (SBLABib; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 160–61.
- 15 Scholars effectively adopting a Janus interpretation include Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 187; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (ZECNT 9; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 190–93; Martyn, *Galatians*, 296–99; Albert Vanhoye, "Pensée théologique et qualité rhétorique en Galates 3,1–14," in *The Truth of the Gospel (Galatians 1:1–4:11)* (ed. Jan Lambrecht; MSBen: Biblical-Ecumenical Section 12; Rome: Benedictina, 1993), 91–125, 91.
- 16 Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 161. Texts and scholars who insert a paragraph break between 3:6 and 3:7 so that 3:6 becomes the explicit conclusion to 3:1–5 include: UBS⁴, NAB, ESV,

indeed look forward to 3:7, a conclusion that effectively differentiates 3:6–7 from the gentile context of 3:1–5.

Wakefield's preference notwithstanding, a backward-looking *καθώς* actually forms a rather weak connection to 3:5.¹⁷ Beginning with syntactical considerations, the comparative adverb *καθώς* expects a complementary clause identifying a parallel to the situation portrayed in 3:6. Galatians 3:5 cannot function as that complementary phrase since it asks a question, namely, whether God supplies the Galatians with the Spirit and works miracles among them ἐξ ἔργων νόμου or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. For the *καθώς* to refer back to 3:5, then, it must stand absolutely (e.g., “in the same way,” “thus”)—a rare use of the word at best¹⁸—and form a parallel with the implied answer to the preceding question. Furthermore, since Paul obviously does not intend to compare God (the subject of 3:5) with Abraham (the subject of 3:6), even this implied answer would not create a direct syntactical parallel.

Interpreting the *καθώς* as a shortened form of *καθώς γέγραπται* (“just as it is written”) would help alleviate some of this syntactical awkwardness by attributing it to Paul's use of a citation,¹⁹ although this potential value in clarifying the argument makes it difficult to understand why Paul would omit his customary *γέγραπται*. Regardless, the nature of 3:6 as a citation means that the focus on God in the Pauline formulation of 3:5 would determine the emphasis of a connection between the two verses.²⁰ This emphasis on God's role does not pose a problem in and of itself, but it does run counter to the focus on Abraham in 3:6, a focus that, as I will demonstrate below, does not seem to derive solely from the verse's nature as a citation. In other words, the focus on Abraham in 3:6 suggests that a backward-looking *καθώς* should highlight—as

NEB, Moo, *Galatians*, 187; Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians* (Pentecostal Commentary; Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo, 2007), 112–13; Matera, *Galatians*, 113; Fung, *Galatians*, 128; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 152; Silva, *Interpreting*, 219–20.

17 Cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 188, who groups 3:6 with 3:1–5 yet concludes, “The particular connection that Paul might have in mind to the previous paragraph is not clear.”

18 Longenecker, *Galatians*, 112. BDAG lists two other examples where a missing clause must be supplied from context: P.Oxy. 1299.9 and 1 Tim 1:3. Contra Fung, *Galatians*, 128, these two examples do not parallel the proposed use in Gal 3:6 since each implies an imperative: “[Do] just as I urged (1 Tim) / have instructed (P.Oxy).” Sam K. Williams, *Galatians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 85, suggests that several instances of *καθώς* in the LXX are best rendered “in the same way,” although he does not cite specific verses.

19 Cf. Rom 8:35–36.

20 Cf. Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:7* (2d ed.; BRS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 170.

most scholars assume that it does—his connection to the Galatians, but the phrasing of 3:5 would instead focus the comparison on God's role.²¹

Even with this focus on God's role, a backward-looking καθώς would still seem to require that Abraham's believing (ἐπίστευσεν) in 3:6 parallel the πίστις in 3:5 as the basis for God's response. Otherwise, these two verses would have nothing in common (καθώς) except the generic fact that God acts, an undisputed point that the question in 3:5 itself already presupposes.²² Accordingly, if 3:6 looks back to 3:5, then the two instances of the πιστ- root must interpret one another: the parallel with Abraham's believing would indicate that ἀκοῆς πίστεως in 3:5 signifies the Galatians' "hearing of faith,"²³ while the implication in Gal 3:5 that God "supplies" and "works" ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως rather than ἐξ ἔργων νόμου would suggest that Paul understands Gen 15:6 to invoke Abraham's faith considered apart from his works.

These two "faiths," however, exhibit significant differences. Abraham believes in God's promise that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars (Gen 15:4–5), in response to which God reckons righteousness to him. The Galatians believe in the gospel (Gal 3:1–5), in response to which God supplies them with the Spirit and works miracles among them. Correlating these faiths as a basis of comparison therefore necessitates that their specific content and effects be abstracted into generality.²⁴ Sam Williams, for example, identifies three components that unite the faiths of Abraham and the Galatians: in each case, "faith" is 1) belief constituting the appropriate human response 2) to a word of divine initiative that 3) results in divine blessing.²⁵ Such generic connections seem unlikely to create a persuasive inductive argument—the

21 So Howard, *Crisis*, 55: "[The] point is: As God 'supplies' and 'works' to and among the Galatians, so he 'reckoned' to Abraham."

22 Howard's suggestion that divine grace underlies and, thus, connects the divine actions (*ibid.*, 55–57) unjustifiably substitutes an unmentioned basis of comparison (grace) for one explicitly signaled by the lexical connections in the text (πίστις).

23 Cf. Sam K. Williams, "The Hearing of Faith: ΑΚΟΗ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Galatians 3," *NTS* 35 (1989): 82–93, 87; Hays, *Faith*, 170. A backward-looking καθώς would therefore rule out interpretations that render the πίστις in ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως christologically (i.e., "the faithful one") or that render the ἀκοή as "report."

24 Paul does claim in 3:8 that the scripture preached the gospel (προεηγγέλισατο) to Abraham, but he explains this claim by citing a different Abrahamic promise, namely, the promise to bless the nations. Indeed, the very need for this explanation in 3:8 suggests that 3:6 does not presume Abraham's faith in the gospel.

25 Sam K. Williams, "Justification and the Spirit in Galatians," *JSNT* 29 (1987): 91–100, 93–94; Williams, *Galatians*, 85–86. Cf. G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians* (IVPNTCS; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 86–88.

scriptural citation would show only that God can respond positively to faith, a conclusion that the Galatians' own experience (3:1–5) already establishes—not to mention that the necessary abstraction logically expands the potential number of “believers” qualifying for Abrahamic sonship (3:7) far beyond those who simply believe the gospel.²⁶

When coupled with the stronger syntactical (καθώς... ἄρα) and lexical (Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν, 3:6 / οἱ ἐκ πίστεως... υἱοί... Ἀβραάμ, 3:7) ties that link 3:6 to 3:7,²⁷ these difficulties with a backward-looking καθώς suggest that the καθώς instead looks forward. The resulting lack of syntactical connection between 3:5 and 3:6 then allows for 3:6 to begin a new phase of the argument.²⁸ The discussion of the gentiles' faith in 3:1–5 therefore need not require that 3:6–7 establish a gentile-inclusive sonship. Indeed, as I will now show, restricting the scope of 3:6–7 to Jewish sonship is precisely what enables a clear deductive argument to emerge and rebut Wakefield's claim that a connection between 3:6 and 3:7 would employ rather enigmatic logic.

Problems for a Gentile-Inclusive Sonship in the Logic of 3:6–7

A forward-looking καθώς could appeal either to Abraham (“Just as Abraham” / “Take Abraham, for example”) or, as an abbreviation of καθώς γέγραπται (“Just as it is written”), to scripture. Although scholars often conflate these options,²⁹ the conflation does not actually work for gentile-inclusive readings of the argument. For the full authority of scripture to support an appeal to Abraham's

26 Presupposing justification as an interim step between faith and God's blessing in 3:5 would parallel God's faith-based justification of Abraham with his faith-based justification of the Galatians in the unstated step of the implied answer to the question in 3:5, but too many crucial elements remain unstated for a compelling reading.

27 Even if the ἄρα refers back to 3:1–6 more broadly, the references to Abraham and faith in 3:7 would indicate that 3:6 forms the main point of connection. Williams, “Justification,” 93, argues against 3:6–7 as a respective protasis and apodosis on the grounds that the three other instances of ἄρα apodosis clauses in Galatians (2:21; 3:29; 5:11) all have an if clause as the protasis and ἄρα as the first word in the apodosis (rather than its second position in 3:7). First Corinthians 15:14, however, provides a clear precedent for Paul's use of ἄρα as the second word in an apodosis. Furthermore, the element appearing before the ἄρα in Gal 3:7 is a second-person verb (γινώσκετε) that falls outside the scope of the actual comparison.

28 So, e.g., François Vouga, *An die Galater* (HNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 71; Betz, *Galatians*, 140.

29 E.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 160; Betz, *Galatians*, 141.

example, the argument would have to ground Abraham's paradigmatic value in elements explicitly stated in the citation. Since a gentile-inclusive reading must understand 3:7 to draw a conclusion about Abrahamic sonship instead of justification by faith, a forward-looking *καθώς* in such a reading would either emphasize Abraham's example with the citation's scriptural nature becoming largely incidental or else establish 3:6 as a scriptural citation without regard for the paradigmatic nature of Abraham's actions.

Most interpreters effectively understand the *καθώς* to initiate an argument from Abraham, with his example of faith-based justification somehow grounding the resulting sonship. In such interpretations, *ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην* in 3:6 attributes righteousness to Abraham, *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* in 3:7 designates those who imitate Abraham's faith, and the resulting Abrahamic sonship is defined in terms of likeness/similarity. Alternatively, a few interpreters see the *καθώς* as initiating an argument from scripture in which Abraham's significance lies not in his example but in his securing the promise that enables the inclusion of uncircumcised gentiles among God's people. Viewed in this way, *ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην* signifies God's crediting a future act of divine righteousness to Abraham's account, an act that Gal 3:8 subsequently identifies with the divine promise to bless the nations *in* Abraham (cf. Isa 51:1–8; Sir 44:19–21).³⁰ The *πίστις* in *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* then refers to Abraham's faithfulness that secures the promise, to God's faithfulness in fulfilling the promise, or to Christ's faithfulness as the means of fulfilling the promise. Finally, these scripture-based interpretations define Abrahamic sonship in terms of ancestry / descent through incorporation into Christ (cf. 3:29).

The precision of the citation and the high density of scriptural quotations in 3:6–14—six citations in nine verses—give credence to the view of 3:6–7 as an argument from scripture, as does the slight manuscript evidence (G, Ambrosiaster, and vg^{clm}) indicating that at least a few ancient scribes and interpreters read the text as *καθώς γέγραπται*.³¹ Nevertheless, this reading seems unlikely. Not only does the identification of *καθώς* as a shortened form of

30 E.g., Campbell, *Deliverance*, 730–32 (discussing Rom 4:3) and Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 54–55.

31 For this view, see Betz, *Galatians*, 140, esp. n. 13; Dunn, *Galatians*, 160; Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (ed. Joachim Rohde; 4th ed.; THKNT 9; Berlin: Evangelische, 1979), 103; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (12th, rev. ed.; KEK 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 127 n. 3; Lagrange, *Galates*, 62; Hilary Le Cornu and Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Galatians* (Jerusalem: Academon, 2005), 182; Campbell, *Deliverance*, 857.

καθώς γέγραπται have no precedent in Paul (or, to my knowledge, elsewhere),³² but the text also lacks the one element that would focus attention on the citation as a citation, namely, γέγραπται.³³

At the same time, the citation's single difference from Paul's likely Septuagintal text—Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν instead of ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβράμ—effectively fronts the name of Abraham, placing it in a position of emphasis directly following the καθώς.³⁴ Paul could, of course, have faithfully transcribed a *Vorlage* that read Ἀβράμ ἐπίστευσεν or, in accordance with the MT, simply ἐπίστευσεν, although the explicit citation of the same verse in Rom 4:3 demonstrates at least his later awareness of the textual form in which Ἀβράμ appears after the verb. Even if Paul has not changed his source text, however, he still uses a textual form that focuses attention on Abraham's example. The wording and syntax of 3:6 thus clearly favor an argument from Abraham.

The divergent interpretations of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 point to the same conclusion. As noted above, arguments based on Abraham's example typically understand the phrase to designate those who imitate Abraham's faith; arguments based on scriptural authority instead understand the phrase to designate those who benefit from someone else's exercise of πίστις. How, then, should we understand οἱ ἐκ πίστεως?

Although Paul uses similar constructions elsewhere,³⁵ οἱ ἐκ πίστεως occurs only twice in the Pauline corpus: in Gal 3:7 and 3:9. According to Maximilian Zerwick, the article + ἐκ + genitive construction denotes members of a group

32 καθώς γέγραπται appears 18 times in Paul's extant letters: Rom 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 15:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 1:31; 2:9; 2 Cor 8:15; 9:9. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *NTS* 7 (1961): 297–333, 299–305, finds no parallels in the DSS to this proposed absolute use of καθώς to introduce a citation.

33 Campbell, *Deliverance*, 857, suggests that, given the string of citations introduced by "abbreviated" textual markers in 3:6–14 and Paul's frequent use of καθώς γέγραπται to introduce citations, the expansion of ὅτι with γέγραπται in 3:10 and 3:13 likely implies the "unspoken presence" of the γέγραπται in 3:6 (as well as in 3:11 and 12). The different introductory formulas, however, could just as easily signal that the citations function in different ways.

34 Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT 9; St. Benno: Leipzig, 1974), 214; Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (BHT 69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 106; Martyn, *Galatians*, 297.

35 E.g., δικαιοῦνται τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ (Rom 3:26); εἰ . . . οἱ ἐκ νόμου κληρονόμοι (Rom 4:14); οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ (Rom 4:16); φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς (Gal 2:12); cf. οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς (Titus 1:10).

characterized by the genitive (cf. τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς, Gal 2:12), hence the common rendering of this phrase as “those characterized by faith” or “those of faith.”³⁶ This default definition favors an argument from Abraham’s example. As Richard Hays observes, however, Paul could have expressed this sentiment simply by using a verbal form—either οἱ πιστεύοντες or ὅσοι πιστεύουσιν—as he does in 3:22 (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) and elsewhere (e.g., Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; 4:24; 10:4; 1 Cor 1:21; 14:22; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13).³⁷ This observation then raises the possibility that Paul uses the unusual form here to differentiate the one who exhibits the πίστις from those who benefit.

For instance, in an exception that effectively proves the rule, George Howard proposes an Abrahamic-based argument that nevertheless identifies ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 as a reference to God’s faithfulness. Contending that the citation of Gen 15:6 emphasizes God’s reckoning, Howard argues that Paul appeals to Abraham as an example not of one who believes but of one whom God justifies based on grace. Those who similarly receive justification based solely on God’s faithfulness (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως) to fulfill his promise to bless the gentiles in Abraham (cf. 3:8)—i.e., based solely on grace—then constitute the “sons of Abraham” in 3:7.³⁸ Even granting that 3:6 emphasizes God’s gracious reckoning, however, that reckoning still comes in response to Abraham’s faith, not God’s faithfulness. The lexical connection of Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν in 3:6 with οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 therefore suggests that human faith forms the common basis of justification. The text provides no reason to suspect that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως refers instead to the divine side of the interaction with the unmentioned concept of grace establishing the connection to 3:6.³⁹

A similar problem plagues Lloyd Gaston’s proposal that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως interprets the preceding reference to God’s δικαιοσύνη in 3:6. In contrast to Howard’s focus on Abraham’s example, Gaston contends that the phrase designates those who benefit from God’s faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to act righteously on Abraham’s behalf.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the lexical connection with Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν in 3:6 once again undermines the analysis. As the text

36 Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples* (trans. Joseph Smith; Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici 114; Rome: 1963), 45. Cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 153; B. Hudson McLean, *The Cursed Christ: Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology* (JSNTSup 126; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 197, esp. n. 41.

37 Hays, *Faith*, 171.

38 Howard, *Crisis*, 57.

39 Howard dismisses the lexical connection as mere “literary flavor” (ibid.), but such “literary flavor” would be exceedingly misleading.

40 Gaston, *Paul*, 58. Cf. W. J. Dalton, “The Meaning of ‘We’ in Galatians,” *ABR* 38 (1990): 33–44: 37.

stands, only Abraham has exercised πίστις in the immediate context. Justifying a switch to divine πίστις in 3:7 is therefore difficult, especially since Paul could have conveyed Gaston's proposed argument more clearly by characterizing the group in 3:7 as οἱ ἐκ δικαιοσύνης, i.e., as those who benefit from God's promised act of righteousness.

Pointing to the promise in Gen 15:4 that "one who will come out *from you*" (ὃς ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ σοῦ) would be Abraham's heir, Caroline Johnson Hodge suggests that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως reflects a wordplay involving genealogical convention: "those who descend from [Abraham's] faithfulness."⁴¹ This interpretation makes sense of the πιστεύω / πίστις connection in 3:6–7 by identifying Abraham as the one who exercises πίστις in each case, but a lexical connection with God's ἐκ πίστεως justification of the gentiles in 3:8 creates a problem. Since ἐκ πίστεως clearly does not reflect genealogical convention in 3:8, Johnson Hodge proposes that this occurrence signifies "based on Christ's faithfulness," with οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 then returning to the idea of Abrahamic descent.⁴² The required alternation between Abrahamic and christological interpretations of ἐκ πίστεως makes this reading improbable. Paul seems unlikely to expect the Galatians to recognize such a subtle wordplay.

Finally, Hays himself suggests that the unusual formulation derives from Hab 2:4, a citation of which appears in Gal 3:11: Ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.⁴³ Supporting this conclusion, Douglas Campbell notes that all 21 instances of ἐκ πίστεως in the Pauline corpus occur in Galatians and Romans, i.e., in the two letters in which Paul cites Hab 2:4.⁴⁴ Because they understand ὁ δίκαιος in the Habakkuk citation as a reference to the Righteous Messiah, Hays and Campbell then both identify οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as those who benefit from Christ's faithfulness.⁴⁵ Unlike the genealogical explanation of ἐκ πίστεως, this reading allows for a consistent interpretation of the phrase throughout 3:6–9. Unlike in the theocentric explanations considered above, the identification of οἱ ἐκ

41 Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 80–85. Noting that the gentiles' connection to the promise in Gen 15:4 comes only through Christ, she suggests that the phrase has his faithfulness in view as well.

42 Ibid., 85–86.

43 Hays, *Faith*, 171.

44 Douglas A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17—A *Crux Interpretum* for the Πίστις Χριστου Debate," *JBL* 113 (1994): 265–85, 268. Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 377, 858–59. The 21 instances are found in Rom 1:17 (2x); 3:26, 30; 4:16 (2x); 5:1; 9:30, 32; 10:6; 14:23 (2x); Gal 2:16; 3:7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 24; 5:5.

45 Hays, *Faith*, 172; Campbell, *Deliverance*, 858–65. Curiously, Hays adopts a very different interpretation in his later commentary: "those whose identity is derived from faith" ("Galatians," 255–56, following Martyn, *Galatians*, 299).

πίστεως as an allusion provides a potential justification for breaking the apparent parallel between Abraham and οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as those who trust in God.

The evidence for οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as an allusion to Hab 2:4 seems compelling, the suggestion that the phrase therefore refers to Christ's faithfulness much less so.⁴⁶ On this latter point, the next section will identify several problems that arise from defining Abrahamic sonship solely in terms of Christ, while Chapter 3 will challenge the christological interpretation of Hab 2:4.⁴⁷ Sticking to the immediate context, however, the customary significance of article + ἐκ + genitive constructions and the ostensibly apt paralleling of Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν in 3:6 with the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως sons of Abraham in 3:7 render it unlikely that Paul would require the Galatians to recognize ἐκ πίστεως as an allusion to (the christological reading of) Hab 2:4 well before he cites the verse.⁴⁸ Even if Paul had previously relayed this interpretation of Hab 2:4 to the Galatians, the primary motivation for identifying οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as an allusion lies in the apparent infrequency with which Paul uses the phrase. The designation therefore does not seem to represent a typical Pauline formulation that the Galatians would immediately recognize, yet it also does not seem so distinctive or awkward in its present context that a reader would necessarily intuit its likely status as an allusion.

The default understanding of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως and the lexical connections of the phrase with Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν in 3:6 and with God's justifying the gentiles ἐκ πίστεως in 3:8 thus create difficulties for interpretations of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως that seek to differentiate the expression of πίστις from those who benefit. Nevertheless, the unusual form still requires explanation if οἱ ἐκ πίστεως designates those who imitate Abraham's faith. In that regard, I note that the nominalization of an adverbial phrase in the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως construction suggests the presence of an implicit verb or verbal phrase. Interpreters often supply "live" as the omitted element for which faith forms the basis, either in the sense of receiving life ("those who receive life based on faith"⁴⁹) or of living ("those

46 Similarly, Francis Watson, "By Faith (of Christ): An Exegetical Dilemma and Its Scriptural Solution," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 147–63, 149; Debbie Hunn, "Pistis Christou in Galatians: the connection to Habakkuk 2:4," *TynBul* 63 (2012): 75–91, 75.

47 See pp. 47–54 and 98–103, respectively.

48 So also H. Wayne Johnson, "The Paradigm of Abraham in Galatians 3:6–9," *TJ* 8 (1987): 179–99, 189–90.

49 E.g., Ellicott, *Galatians*, 69. Longenecker prefers the translation "those who *rely on* faith" on the grounds that human faith represents only a subjective response to the work of Christ that forms the objective basis for human redemption (*Galatians*, 114).

who live out of faith”⁵⁰). The parallel with Abraham’s justifying faith in 3:6, however, suggests that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως instead signifies “those [who are justified] based on faith.”⁵¹ I accordingly propose that Paul uses οἱ ἐκ πίστεως rather than οἱ πιστεύοντες or ὅσοι πιστεύουσιν because the former formulation enables the parallel to extend beyond faith to encompass Abraham’s justification as well.

The surrounding context, which consistently links ἐκ πίστεως with δικαίωσιν and its cognates, supports this interpretation. The connection occurs in the foundational citation of Hab 2:4 (ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως),⁵² so this reading anticipates and accords with Hab 2:4 without requiring recognition of the allusion. Similarly, the claim that “God justifies the gentiles based on faith” (ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός, 3:8) separates the instance of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 from its only other Pauline occurrence in Gal 3:9. Both Pauline instances of this expression (3:7, 9) thus not only follow but also draw inferences from (ἄρα, 3:7 / ὥστε, 3:9) references to justification by faith (3:6, 8). The only instance of ἐκ πίστεως in Galatians prior to 3:7 (δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, 2:16) also links the phrase explicitly to justification (cf. 3:24; 5:5).⁵³ In fact, in the few cases where Galatians does not overtly relate ἐκ πίστεως to justification—3:22 connects ἐκ πίστεως with the promise; 3:2 and 5 connect the related ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως with God’s supplying the Spirit and working miracles—it seems reasonable to suggest that the phrase functions as shorthand for “based on [justification by] faith.” Read in this way, the unusual phrase οἱ ἐκ πίστεως further supports the idea of an argument from Abraham’s example.

The argument in 3:6–7 thus seems to appeal to Abraham’s example of trusting God, yet example-based arguments for a gentile-inclusive sonship ultimately prove to be incoherent. The Jerusalem Bible, for instance, reads the opening καθὼς as an *exemplum* reference: “Take Abraham, for example.”⁵⁴ As

50 E.g., Witherington, *Grace*, 226.

51 So, e.g., Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.3.12; William M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (2d ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1900), 345. Cf. John Calvin, “Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians,” in *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thess., I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Calvin’s Commentaries 21; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 11–188, 87.

52 See Watson, “By Faith,” 159–62. Although, in contrast to Watson, I ultimately conclude that ἐκ πίστεως in Gal 3:11 / Hab 2:4 modifies ζήσεται, justification seems to be implied: “the righteous will receive life based on their [justification by] faith.” See pp. 98–103 below.

53 Romans explicitly connects ἐκ πίστεως with righteousness/justification in 1:17 (where God’s righteousness is revealed by faith); 3:26, 30; 5:1; 9:30–32; and 10:6.

54 So also Longenecker, *Galatians*, 112. Finding no other examples, Silva, *Interpreting*, 219, questions whether καθὼς can truly function as an *exemplum* reference.

with any inductive interpretation of 3:6, an *exemplum* reference would not produce a definitive conclusion. It would also essentially reduce Abraham to the status of an example, whereas the ensuing appeals to Abrahamic descent throughout Gal 3–4 (e.g., 3:29) suggest that the patriarch has a more integral role in the argument than simply serving as a convenient example of justification by faith.⁵⁵ More importantly for a forward-looking καθώς, an *exemplum* reference would not actually lead to the conclusion about Abrahamic sonship in 3:7, which derives from Abraham's example rather than from Abraham as an example.

A forward-looking καθώς therefore needs to function as a simple comparative ("Just as Abraham") introducing a deductive argument from Abraham's example. The resulting argument then requires the presence of an implied premise in 3:6–7, ideally one that everyone involved in the discussion would both intuitively supply and affirm.⁵⁶ Unfortunately for gentile-inclusive interpretations, an example alone simply cannot establish sonship without reducing "sonship" to generic similarity.⁵⁷ Finding an appropriate premise capable of producing the conclusion that everyone justified by faith is a son of Abraham accordingly proves difficult, hence Wakefield's aforementioned perplexity.⁵⁸

55 Cf. Howard, *Crisis*, 55: "[Paul's] emphasis on the sons of Abraham (vss. 7, 29) and the blessing of Abraham (vs. 14) suggests that Abraham, rather than being merely an example of justification by faith, is part of a salvific faith-process which works for the salvation of the Gentiles."

56 Mayordomo claims that 3:6 and 3:7 form a logical argument only if they are read as two independent premises that lead to an implied *conclusion*, namely, that all believers are justified by God (*Argumentiert*, 155). Even aside from the admittedly rare use ("die seltene Bedeutung," 165) of ἄρα as a mere rhetorical accent that this reading requires, Paul would surely not have left such a crucial conclusion unstated. Significantly, Mayordomo's analysis must presume the connection of believers with Abraham's sons in the "premise" of 3:7, a connection he attributes simply to the function of examples in enthymemes (154 n. 309).

57 Although Kwon, *Eschatology*, 83–84, rightly intuits that the comparison in 3:6–7 focuses on justification by faith, his insistence that 3:7 includes gentiles reduces "sonship" to the experience of a similar justification. In other words, he claims that Paul does not "[*affirm*] the Galatian believers' status as Abraham's sons" (emphasis original) but instead uses sonship merely as "an exegetical device to establish the truth of justification by faith" (84–85). In this reading, the introduction of sonship only obscures Paul's real point about justification. This view of sonship also contrasts with the more robust understanding of Abrahamic descent that appears throughout Gal 3–4.

58 Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 161. Cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 198: Paul's logic is "not immediately clear." G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 112, argues that the implied premise is "as God dealt with

In contrast, the suggestion that 3:7 instead identifies justification by faith as an essential characteristic of (Jewish) Abrahamic sonship enables a rather straightforward deductive argument to emerge: the conclusion results from joining 3:6 with the implied premise that children exhibit the key attributes of their parents.⁵⁹ As Johnson Hodge notes, this principle that “descendants are manifestations—both in physical makeup and in character traits—of their ancestors” was a “normative assumption” of ancient Mediterranean cultures.⁶⁰ Since in this reading Paul would be reminding his readers of something they already know—i.e., an indicative γινώσκετε in 3:7—it also seems reasonable to expect that the Galatians would be able to follow the argument without the explicit citing of this “normative assumption.”

This implied premise solves the logical problem of 3:6–7 because it presupposes rather than establishes the parent-child relationship. In other words, it solves the problem by limiting the scope of the claim in 3:6–7 to Jews. Understanding 3:6–7 as a discussion of the Jews’ traditional Abrahamic sonship thus produces a contextually sensitive, coherent reading, something gentile-inclusive interpretations cannot do. The superiority of this reading, however, extends far beyond its ability to produce a coherent argument. As the following section will show, it also resolves the numerous contextual and theological issues that gentile-inclusive interpretations raise.

Abraham, so he will deal with all men.” Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 155; Byrne, *Sons*, 149. This premise, however, would lead to the conclusion that God justifies everyone who believes. While we might expect Paul to draw this conclusion given the concerns of the letter, it is not the conclusion that he actually draws in 3:7. In an overly complicated analysis, Marc Debanné “solves” this problem by arguing that the conclusion of Hansen’s enthymeme combines with an implied syllogism’s conclusion that “Anyone who receives righteousness is Abraham’s son” to form a third syllogism that results in the conclusion of 3:7. See Marc J. Debanné, “Analysis of Enthymemes in Galatians,” Appendix D2 to *Enthymemes in the Letters of Paul* (LNTS 303; London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 8–9. Cited 18 February 2016. Online: <http://markgoodacre.org/LNTS/debanne/gal.pdf>.

59 Cf. Carl Ludwig Bauer’s 1773 appeal to the same reasoning: “*fili enim imitantur patres*” (cited in Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 154 n. 309, who curiously describes the logic as unnecessarily complicated).

60 Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 19–42, esp. 42. See, e.g., Philo, who affirms that “kinship [τὸ συγγενές] is measured not by blood alone . . . but by similarity of actions and by the eager pursuit of [such actions] [πράξεων ὁμοιότητι καὶ θήρα τῶν αὐτῶν]” (*Virt.* 195). Johnson Hodge also points to such instances as Homer, *Il.* 6.145–211, 215; 4 Macc 13:18–20; and Demosthenes 60.4. Of course, several NT passages also presuppose this principle: see Matt 3:8–9 / Luke 3:8; Matt 5:44–45 / Luke 6:35; Matt 23:29–32; John 8:39–44.

Problems for a Gentile-Inclusive Sonship in Broader Contextual and Theological Considerations

As noted above, interpreters tend to read 3:6–7 as extending Abrahamic sonship to gentiles. In the most common interpretation, Abraham's faith becomes the model that determines an Abrahamic sonship based on likeness to Abraham; in the alternative, Abraham's faith secures the divine act of righteousness that results in a sonship characterized by ancestry through incorporation into Christ. The inability to produce a coherent argument troubles the former, the clear contextual signals of an appeal to Abraham's example, the latter. These identified problems with gentile-inclusive readings, however, constitute just the tip of the proverbial iceberg, especially for the traditional example-based interpretations.

For these example-based interpretations, the utterly surprising nature of the conclusion in 3:7 provides the first sign of trouble. Genesis 15:6 portrays Abraham's justification by faith; it says nothing about the identity of his sons. The citation thus lends itself much more readily to a claim about justification than about sonship (cf. Rom 4:9–13). That Paul would not draw this more straightforward inference here in Galatians is all the more astonishing given the letter's overarching preoccupation with the role of faith in justification (cf. 2:16, 17, 21; 3:8, 11, 21, 24; 5:4, 5). Furthermore, for 3:6–7 to redefine Abrahamic sonship would effectively require that Paul either ignores or assumes the connection of faith and righteousness in the Genesis citation. The appropriateness of Gen 15:6 for addressing justification by faith renders the former unlikely; the disputed nature of justification elsewhere in Galatians does the same for the latter.

The literary context of 3:6–7 not only leads a reader to expect an inference regarding justification by faith, it also completely fails to prepare a reader for an inference regarding Abrahamic sonship. Although the motif of Abrahamic descent does continue to play a major role in the logic of Galatians once it has been introduced, nothing in 1:1–3:5 has anticipated the theme's sudden appearance in 3:6–7. Only one explanation can possibly account for Paul's drawing a conclusion about this previously unmentioned theme at the expense of the simpler—and seemingly more relevant—inference about justification by faith: in this reading, Abrahamic sonship must represent the true point of dispute in Galatia. In other words, this reading must assume that Paul has no need to explain the introduction of Abrahamic sonship into the argument because the agitators have already established its importance for the Galatians, presumably arguing that these gentile converts required circumcision to become

true sons of Abraham.⁶¹ As Yon-Gyong Kwon notes, however, if Abrahamic sonship were the overriding issue, then explaining why Paul invokes Gen 15:6 in the first place becomes more difficult.⁶²

Somewhat ironically, many scholars find additional confirmation that the agitators have introduced Abraham into the discussion in the several theological and contextual problems that this standard interpretation creates. After all, if Paul were explicating the gospel using his own terms, he would presumably have offered a more consistent and persuasive argument. The apparent holes in his logic—so the argument goes—suggest that he has hurriedly responded to an opposing position without thinking through all the implications of his claims. These “holes,” however, are rather blatant and significant. They do not comprise the kind of minor logical omissions and subtle contradictions that an author might reasonably overlook.

I begin with the issue that Klaus Berger identifies as “das theologische Kernproblem” of Gal 3: essentially, how can Abrahamic descent be open to everyone who is ἐκ πίστεως (3:7) while at the same time being limited to Christ as Abraham’s only seed (3:16)?⁶³ Scholars who seek to resolve the difficulty typically point to Paul’s assertion in 3:29 that those “of Christ” (οἱ Χριστοῦ) are Abrahamic seed, a conclusion purportedly anticipated by the ἐν σοί in 3:8 (cf. 3:14a).⁶⁴ While such appeals might resolve the numerical problem by showing how the singular seed could become a plurality, this resolution comes at the cost of introducing another discrepancy that proves irreconcilable.

The problem arises in that Gal 3:7 and 3:29 present different criteria for Abrahamic descent: faith and incorporation into Christ, respectively.⁶⁵ The two criteria are not inherently opposed, but if 3:6–7 redefines Abrahamic

61 Preeminently, Martyn, *Galatians*, 299, 302–6, but this ubiquitous interpretation goes back at least as far as Chrysostom’s *Hom. Gal.* (PG 61.650–651). Galatians 6:12–13, however, suggests that the agitators have linked their circumcision advocacy to law observance rather than Abrahamic sonship.

62 Kwon, *Eschatology*, 81–82.

63 Klaus Berger, “Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen,” *MTZ* 17 (1966): 47–89, 47.

64 E.g., Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 118–19.

65 Rather than truly reconciling the two conceptions of Abrahamic descent, Donaldson instead seeks to determine which conception is more “fundamental” to Paul’s thought (incorporation) and which more rhetorically conditioned (faith). He then argues that an underlying narrative enables the subordination of the latter to the former (*ibid.*, 119–22), an argument that does not really address the objections that I will identify in the main text above. In contrast, J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 50–51, simply allows the discrepancy in these

sonship based solely on faith, then mere compatibility is not enough: οἱ ἐκ πίστεως and οἱ Χριστοῦ must be equivalent expressions. Otherwise, incorporation into Christ would become superfluous for those who were already faith-based sons of Abraham. Even before we consider whether this equivalence can be shown, the discrepancy itself raises the question as to why Paul would obscure Christ's role in 3:6–7 in favor of forging a direct connection between believers and Abraham. Why not simply introduce the all-important concept of Christ as the seed in 3:6–7?

Rhetorical questions aside, the suggestion that 3:7 establishes faith as the sole criterion for Abrahamic sonship means that the differing criteria in 3:7 and 3:29 point to two different conceptions of Abrahamic descent. To include gentiles, the term “son of Abraham” in 3:7 must be based solely on a similarity in action/belief rather than any genealogical connection.⁶⁶ In Gal 3:29, on the other hand, a share in Abrahamic descent comes by virtue of one's incorporation into Christ, who is Abraham's sole heir according to 3:16.

Based on the model of descent implied by the common interpretation of 3:7, both Christ and believers would become sons by imitating Abraham's faith, a scenario that renders union with Christ superfluous and undermines the claim in 3:16 that Christ constitutes Abraham's only seed. If, on the other hand, believers require incorporation into Christ to become sons (3:29), then the critical aspect of the sonship-enabling faith in 3:7 must be in some way christological, a point that makes it difficult to establish Christ's sonship in 3:16 on the same basis. Furthermore, the ubiquitous attempts to “find” Christ in 3:7 either as the implied object of the believers' faith (“based on faith [in Christ]”) or as the implied one whose faithfulness is in view (“based on [Christ's] faithfulness”) effectively undermine the parallel with Abraham—who neither believed in Jesus⁶⁷ nor was justified based on someone else's faithfulness (at least not according to Gen 15:6)—that in this reading forms the basis for sonship in 3:6–7.⁶⁸ These faith- and incorporation-based models of Abrahamic descent

“contingent” expressions to stand unresolved. For more detailed analysis of 3:29, see pp. 209–30 below.

66 Cf. Hansen, *Abraham*, 113: “the word ‘son’ is used in the Semitic sense to connote spiritual kinship.”

67 Contra Hendrikus Boers, *Theology out of the Ghetto: A New Testament Exegetical Study concerning Religious Exclusiveness* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 79, who interprets Abraham's faith in 3:6 as christological because Christ eventually becomes the promised seed for which Abraham believes. Even granting this awkward suggestion, Abraham's faith would still not be “christological” in the same sense as the Galatians' faith.

68 Hence, de Boer argues that Abraham “provides *only* an analogy, and a rough one at that, . . . [one that] cannot be pressed too far” but which establishes only “the exclusive

thus prove to be mutually contradictory.⁶⁹ Accordingly, if 3:6–7 includes gentiles as Abrahamic sons on grounds consistent with an argument for descent based on incorporation, then, as the main alternative interpretation acknowledges, 3:6–7 cannot logically appeal to Abraham's example.

The view that Gal 3:6–7 identifies gentiles as Abrahamic sons based solely on their faith also goes against the Genesis context of Paul's cited text (Gen 15:6). In the first place, Abraham's frustration at his lack of a biological heir forms the starting point for the whole discussion in Gen 15; it would be exceedingly ironic if Paul were to use Abraham's subsequent belief in God's promise of incalculable physical descendants (Gen 15:2–3) essentially to disinherit those very biological descendants in favor of "adopted" children.⁷⁰ More importantly, as Hans Hübner emphasizes, such a redefinition of Abrahamic sonship ignores God's command in Gen 17:9–14 for all males of Abraham's household (whether biological or not) to be circumcised.⁷¹ On what grounds could Paul justify his blatant disregard of this command? At the very least, we would expect him to acknowledge this disregard, especially given the prominent role scholars often assign to Gen 17 in their reconstructions of the agitators' position.⁷²

This last observation then raises a problem that has rarely been given its due weight, namely, the utter unpersuasiveness of Paul's purported argument. As

relationship between 'believing' . . . and 'justification'" (*Galatians*, 190–91). In fact, de Boer's attempt to read *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* in 3:7 as a reference to Christ's faithfulness undermines the relevance of even this relationship, thereby rendering the argument incoherent.

69 In the second edition of *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, Hays retracts his earlier conclusion that Gal 3 "depicts Abraham not as an exemplary paradigm for faith but as a representative figure in and through whom others are blessed" (177) on the grounds that this conclusion likely represents an "overly precise and rationalistic distinction . . . [that] posits a dichotomy where [Hays now suspects] Paul saw none" (290). Abraham does seem to function as both paradigm and blessing enabler in Gal 3, but to suggest that Paul therefore saw no distinction between the two functions overcorrects.

70 Contra Hansen, *Galatians*, 87, who combines Gen 15:6 with Gal 3:8 to argue that Abraham's faith in God's promise for innumerable descendants is effectively his faith in the blessing of the gentiles.

71 Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (trans. James C. G. Greig; Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 16–17, 52–53. Cf. Donaldson, *Paul*, 124–25; Stanley, *Arguing*, 117 n. 9.

72 E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 291; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 18; Hansen, *Abraham*, 113. Hays argues that Paul appeals to Gen 15:6 in part because it comes "*prior to [Abraham's] circumcision*" (emphasis original), thereby giving him "crucial hermeneutical leverage" over the agitators' "almost certain[]" appeals to Gen 17 ("Galatians," 255). If Hays is right, then we must ask why Paul chose not to make use of this leverage until he wrote Rom 4:9–12.

mentioned above, the sudden introduction of Abrahamic sonship as a topic, the polemical nature of its first appearance, and the (in this view) radical redefinition of the term practically necessitate that Paul's argument responds to the agitators, yet for Paul simply to assert that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are sons of Abraham without addressing the biblical command for all of Abraham's sons to be circumcised would hardly constitute a compelling rebuttal. Even worse, the agitators could endorse this argument to enhance their own case: "Yes, Abraham was justified by his faith in Gen 15. Then, in Gen 17, God told him to get circumcised. You Galatians should indeed follow his example." Paul could hardly have made a worse argument against the need for a subsequent circumcision.

Further problems also emerge in the christological appeals that advocates of both incorporation- and example-based interpretations must make to enable the inclusion of uncircumcised gentiles as Abrahamic sons. Example-based readings typically interpret the πίστις in οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as the believers' "faith [in Christ]," whereas incorporation-based readings interpret οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as a reference to the divine/Abrahamic/christological faithfulness that enables the gentiles' incorporation into Christ as Abraham's single seed (cf. 3:16, 29). Neither move finds explicit warrant in the text: unlike in 3:22 (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; cf. 2:16, 20), Paul does not actually limit the πίστις in 3:7 (or 3:9) with a reference to Christ. Interpreters must therefore import any specifically Christian nuance to οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, an awkward observation given Christ's central importance to gentile-inclusive arguments.

More importantly, regardless of whether Abraham serves as paradigmatic figure or progenitor, redefining Abrahamic sonship solely in terms of Christ would effectively eliminate Israel's status as a national entity or people group. As its name indicates, Israel consists of those descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob/Israel. By restricting Abrahamic sonship to Christ-based models, Paul would therefore be stripping the patriarchs' physical descendants of any legitimacy or theological significance. Furthermore, as Günter Klein notes, the dissolution of Israel would affect the nation's past as well as its present since there could not have been any Abrahamic sons before Christ.⁷³ This reading thus transforms Israel's history from *Heilsgeschichte* into a deceived *Unheilsgeschichte*.

73 Günter Klein, *Rekonstruktion und Interpretation: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (BEvT 50; Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), 203, cf. 208. Cf. Bruce W. Longenecker, "Sharing in Their Spiritual Blessings? The Stories of Israel in Galatians and Romans," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 58–84, 70 n. 22.

The dissolution of Israel would be theologically troubling on its own; the fact that Paul elsewhere continues to recognize and attribute a theological significance to Israel exacerbates the problem by introducing the additional issue of Pauline consistency. Although we need not look beyond Gal 3:13–14 for evidence that Paul's theology retains a place for Israel,⁷⁴ his treatment of Abraham in Romans provides the clearest illustration. Indeed, Romans shows how easily Paul could have incorporated gentiles into Abraham's family without disbanding Israel. Romans 4:9–12, for instance, uses Gen 15:6 to unite two distinct types of Abrahamic descendants, the circumcised (Jews) and the uncircumcised (gentiles), through their shared theocentric faith (cf. Rom 4:24).⁷⁵ Paul could have drawn a similar inference in Gal 3:7 simply by concluding that "you [i.e., the gentile Galatians] who are ἐκ πίστεως are sons of Abraham" or that "the ones who are ἐκ πίστεως, these are *also* sons of Abraham." Nevertheless, scholarly consensus holds that Gal 3:6–7 draws a very different conclusion. As Bruce Longenecker summarizes, whereas in Romans Paul organically incorporates the gentiles into Abraham's existing family, in Galatians "[n]o effort is made to recognize Abraham as the patriarch of ethnic Israel, and various attempts are made to avoid any such impressions."⁷⁶

Scholars do try to avoid the logical implications of this interpretation. Berger, for instance, argues that we should not push *ad hoc* statements such as 3:7 for implications beyond their stated purpose.⁷⁷ Such a position effectively admits the larger incoherence of Paul's argument. After critically surveying the scholarly attempts to explain these perceived differences between Romans and Galatians, Longenecker reaches the same conclusion: this reading of 3:7 cannot be reconciled with Romans, and Paul's divergent attitudes on this crucial issue threaten to undermine any larger constructs of Pauline coherence.⁷⁸

74 See pp. 110–31.

75 For the perceived conflict that Romans portrays a clearly theocentric faith linking believers directly to Abraham whereas Galatians portrays a christocentric faith linking believers to Abraham through Christ, see Donaldson, *Paul*, 122–23. On perceived differences in the use of Abraham between Romans and Galatians more generally, see Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 1991), 73–74; Beker, *Paul*, 95–104; Hübner, *Law*, 51–57; Berger, "Abraham," 87–88.

76 Longenecker, "Sharing," 70.

77 Berger, "Abraham," 48.

78 Longenecker, "Sharing," 80. He identifies six factors often (unsuccessfully) invoked to explain the differences: 1) a common narrative substructure, 2) the different rhetorical situations, 3) aesthetic qualities of the arguments, 4) Paul's emotional state, 5) differences in genre, and 6) developments in Paul's thought.

Gentile-inclusive interpretations of Abrahamic sonship in 3:6–7 thus create substantial, even insurmountable difficulties. As demonstrated, the traditional interpretation in which the gentiles' faith in Christ makes them Abrahamic sons based on Abraham's example is both logically incoherent and fundamentally incompatible with the subsequent portrayal of Abrahamic descent based on incorporation into Christ in 3:29. This interpretation also has trouble accounting for the focus on Abrahamic sonship in 3:7, goes against the Genesis context of Paul's citation, and results in an argument that has virtually no foreseeable chance of persuading the Galatians. Additionally, all christological redefinitions of Abrahamic sonship effectively dissolve Israel as a theologically significant entity, not only in the present but also with regard to the past. This development, problematical in its own right, then creates larger issues of Pauline coherence.

Once again, understanding 3:6–7 to highlight justification by faith as an essential characteristic of Jewish claims to Abrahamic sonship resolves all of these issues. For example, the implied premise that enables a coherent argument about Jewish sonship to emerge—namely, that children exhibit the key attributes of their parents⁷⁹—presupposes rather than establishes the parent-child relationship. In accordance with the lexico-syntactical evidence, it therefore enables 3:6–7 to focus on Abraham's example as a decisive criterion of sonship without undermining the letter's subsequent understanding of Abrahamic descent in terms of ancestry. It also produces a conclusion emphasizing justification by faith rather than Abrahamic sonship. In other words, it produces exactly the kind of conclusion that the letter's overall concern with justification would lead us to expect Paul to draw from Gen 15:6. Furthermore, since this emphasis on justification by faith fits well within the larger epistolary context, Paul's introduction of Abraham no longer must depend on the assumption that Abrahamic sonship forms the critical issue in Galatia. Regardless of whether or not the agitators had appealed to Abraham, Paul invokes the patriarch's example because it accords with his gospel, a point that will become even clearer as the analysis progresses.

This Jewish reading of 3:7 also avoids the larger contextual and theological problems associated with a gentile-inclusive reading. With regard to Christ's role, the text does not mention him here because Jewish claims to Abrahamic sonship do not depend on Christ. To be sure, Paul will introduce a christological twist to this claim in 3:14b, but at this point he is still establishing first principles with which even his opponents could agree.

79 See p. 46.

With regard to Israel, this interpretation clearly preserves the nation as a theologically distinct entity. Indeed, the statement affirms Israel's special status as Abrahamic sons by virtue of their shared faith, thereby creating a stronger parallel with Abraham's theocentric faith in 3:6 than Christian interpretations allow. Pauline inconsistency on this point, especially with Romans, thus ceases to be an issue. Restricting the application to Jews also correlates with the emphasis on biological heirs in Gen 15. The conflict with the command in Gen 17 for Abraham to circumcise all of his sons disappears as well, both because faith need not be the only criterion for sonship and because faith need not exclude an act such as circumcision. The argument will, of course, ultimately differentiate faith and law, but it does not do so here. The claim presents nothing with which the agitators might take issue, yielding a potential persuasiveness that gentile-inclusive interpretations simply cannot match.

The Case for an Exclusively Jewish Sonship in 3:6–7

This chapter began by noting that the conclusion in 3:7—"the ones who are ἐκ πίστεως, these are sons of Abraham"—could either identify everyone who is ἐκ πίστεως as a son of Abraham or highlight being ἐκ πίστεως as an essential characteristic of Abraham's sons. The former would redefine Abrahamic sonship to allow the inclusion of Christian gentiles. Assuming the traditional understanding of Abrahamic sonship, the latter would remind the readers that justification by faith constitutes an essential component of Jewish claims to that sonship. Noting the syntactical parallel in 6:12 and the lack of evidence suggesting that the nature of Abrahamic sonship was already at issue in Galatia, I then suggested that, despite a seemingly universal preference for gentile-inclusive interpretations, we should instead understand 3:6–7 as discussing Jewish sonship exclusively.

The intervening material has sought to substantiate this claim. I first addressed a purported source of contextual support for gentile-inclusive interpretations by arguing that the initial καθώς in 3:6 does not look backward to the discussion of the gentile Galatians' faith in 3:1–5. The resulting break in the argument accordingly limits the influence of 3:1–5 on the interpretation of 3:6–7. Next, I examined the logic of 3:6–7. Whereas gentile-inclusive arguments proved unable to produce a contextually sensitive, coherent argument, a focus on Jewish sonship enabled a simple deductive argument to emerge: building on the normative assumption in the ancient world that children exhibit the attributes of their parents, Abraham's example in 3:6 leads to the expected conclusion in 3:7 that his sons must exhibit the same justifying

faith. I then identified a host of broader contextual and theological issues that gentile-inclusive readings raise, all of which disappear if the argument assumes standard Jewish sonship.

Accordingly, rather than signifying that everyone justified by faith becomes a son of Abraham, Paul's inference in 3:7 instead seems to establish that every true son of Abraham must be justified by faith, a claim that every good Jew could affirm. After all, it was the Jews' covenantal bond with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their expression of that faith in the observance of his holy law that justified them and differentiated them from other potential Abrahamic heirs. The emphatic οἱ τοῖς in 3:7 then serves to exclude anyone who might have a claim to Abrahamic sonship apart from this shared faith, such as Abraham's descendants outside of the Isaac-Jacob/Israel line (cf. Rom 9:6–13).

The phrasing of 3:7 points in this direction as well. As Brendan Byrne notes, Paul's formulation highlights υἱοί by separating it from Ἀβραάμ and placing it before the verb.⁸⁰ This emphasis well suits a context where Paul wants to highlight “sonship” over against other ways of being related to Abraham (such as mere physical descent). The inference thus serves to remind Paul's readers—hence, an indicative γινώσκετε in 3:7—of the importance of faith in the Jews' claim to be Abraham's (sole) “sons.”⁸¹

Despite these substantial interpretive advantages, few interpreters acknowledge even the possibility that 3:6–7 focuses on Jewish claims to Abrahamic sonship. I have already addressed two textual features—the connection to 3:1–5 and the emphatic nature of 3:7—that often prompt a gentile-inclusive reading. Two others, however, still require comment: the focus on gentiles in 3:8–9 and the letter's subsequent treatment of Abraham's seed.

First, Gal 3:8–9 has close ties to 3:6–7 as the connecting particle δέ in 3:8 and the repeated οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 and 3:9 indicate. Most scholars accordingly conclude that the discussion of God's justifying and blessing the gentiles by faith in 3:8–9 somehow draws out the key implications for the gentiles of the argument in 3:6–7. The ensuing discussion of 3:8–10 in Chapter 3 will argue

80 Byrne, *Sons*, 149. 29 notes several manuscripts that transpose υἱοί εἰσιν: ⳨² A C D F G 0278 33 1739 1881 M latt; Ir^{lat}. Evidence for the accepted text appears in P⁴⁶ ⳨* B Ψ 81 326 1241^s 2464 *pc*.

81 Cf. Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity* (JSNTSup 273; London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 96: “From the standpoint of the tradition of Abraham as the man of faith in the true God, Paul's scriptural proof (3.6–7) for the descendants of Abraham being those who have faith in the same God would ring true.” Galatians 3:6–7 accordingly makes a novel claim only if, as Calvert-Koyzis contends, these verses already define faith over against law.

that this interpretation cannot stand.⁸² To highlight just one potential problem, Gal 3:8–9 never mentions Abrahamic *sonship*, focusing instead on the Abrahamic *blessing*. Leaving the more extended discussion for later, I simply note here that if, as argued above, 3:7 does not redefine Abrahamic sonship, then the references to “sons of Abraham” in 3:6–7 and “gentiles” in 3:8–9 necessarily distinguish two different groups that the larger argument unites on the grounds that they are both οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, i.e., those [justified] by faith.⁸³

Second, Gal 3:29 clearly incorporates gentiles into Abraham’s seed (σπέρμα), a result that interpreters typically read back into 3:7 based on the assumption that υἱοί and σπέρμα function as roughly synonymous terms of Abrahamic descent. I have already noted, however, the logical incompatibility of incorporation- and example-based redefinitions of sonship.⁸⁴ I therefore contend that Paul’s argument does indeed distinguish between Abraham’s “sons” and his promised “seed.”⁸⁵ As the examination of 3:15–4:11 in Part II will show, this distinction derives from God’s adoption of the patriarch, which entails that the promised “seed” must be a son of God as well as a (traditionally defined) son of Abraham.

The rarity of υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ in Paul supports this distinction. Outside of Gal 3:7, Paul always refers to Abraham’s descendants as σπέρμα (Gal 3:16, 29; Rom 4:11–13, 16), even when referring specifically to Jews (Rom 9:7, 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). This lone instance of the phrase “sons of Abraham” could accordingly indicate that Gal 3:7 appropriates the language of the agitators.⁸⁶ That Paul does not reinforce his understanding of the phrase through continued use—he reverts to “seed” language (3:29) and even calls the Galatians “sons of God” (3:26) at a point that seems tailor-made to reference their *Abrahamic* sonship⁸⁷—argues against this possibility. I suggest that Paul instead uses υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ in 3:7 because he wants to highlight the Jews’ connection to Abraham, but he

82 See pp. 62–97.

83 The identity of the particular group in view, whether sons of Abraham (3:7) or gentiles (3:9), accordingly limits the scope of the article in the two instances of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, i.e., the οἱ does not signify “everyone.”

84 See pp. 48–50.

85 So also Kwon, *Eschatology*, 91, although he understands the distinction somewhat differently.

86 So, e.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 299. Martyn tries to have it both ways, however, arguing that Paul’s subsequent use of σπέρμα in 3:29 must also reflect “the Galatians’ fascination with the Teachers’ references to the *sperma* of Abraham” since Paul would otherwise presumably have continued to use “sons” as in 3:7 (377).

87 See pp. 165–68.

cannot use his customary *σπέρμα* language since, within the context of Galatians and its one-seed argument (3:16), *σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ* can refer only to Christ(ians). Thus, when speaking of the Jews, Paul differentiates them from those in Christ by identifying them as “sons of Abraham.”

Accordingly, neither the emphatic nature of 3:7, nor the surrounding gentile contexts of 3:1–5 and 3:8–9, nor the identification of gentiles as Abrahamic seed in 3:29 requires a gentile-inclusive redefinition of Abrahamic sonship in 3:6–7. Admittedly, if an interpreter starts with the assumption that 3:6–7 redefines Abrahamic sonship, then these features can be read in ways that support this redefinition—albeit not without introducing the host of interpretive problems discussed above—thereby seeming to reinforce the legitimacy of the initial assumption. If, however, an interpreter starts with the assumption that Abrahamic sonship in 3:7 retains its customary definition of physical descent from Abraham—and why would it not?—then none of these features need call that initial assumption into question.

These observations offer potential insight into why most interpreters, whether ancient or modern, seem not to have even considered the possibility that *υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ* in 3:7 refers strictly to Jews.⁸⁸ The earliest extant allusions to / interpretations of this passage appear in Justin’s *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 119 (ca. 147–161 CE), Irenaeus’s *Adversus haereses* 4.21.1 and 5.32.2 (ca. 182–188 CE), and Tertullian’s *Adversus Marcionem* 5.3 (ca. 207 CE). The earliest surviving full commentary on Galatians comes from Chrysostom at the end of the fourth century. By the time of these writers, the gentile church was ascending, and anti-Semitism had begun its insidious intrusion into the church’s theology. The inclusion of gentile Christians as children and heirs of Abraham had also been well established, based in no small part on the argument of Galatians itself. In such a climate, it hardly seems surprising that these late second- / early third-century readers would understand *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* in 3:7 as a generic description of all Christians, an interpretation that exegetes have followed ever since.

In other words, later Christians’ more developed understanding of Abrahamic descent as being somehow inclusive of uncircumcised gentiles is precisely what makes it seem reasonable that the definition of this sonship would be open to debate in 3:7. In the first century CE, however, the title “sons of Abraham” still clearly designated Jews, a fact implicitly acknowledged by the many reconstructions arguing that Galatians addresses a dispute over the

88 For summary of patristic interpretations of this passage, see Martin Meiser, *Galater* (Novum Testamentum Patristicum 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 129: “Als Söhne Abrahams werden generell die Christen gegenueber den Juden benannt.”

gentile Christians' status as Abrahamic sons. I simply contend that the Galatians would have had little reason to question this customary understanding of οἱ Ἀβραάμ. The preceding analysis shows that nothing in the letter itself requires or even promotes such questioning. This assessment then suggests that the lack of attestation for this reading results at least in part from a significant lacuna in the otherwise extensive history of interpretation, namely, our lack of sources from the first century itself.

Finally, I should briefly explain how the proposed interpretation of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως relates to Douglas Campbell's broadside against the viability of justification by faith as a soteriological framework.⁸⁹ Identifying Rom 1–4 as the basis for traditional "Justification theory," Campbell defines this model as one in which rational individuals discern from the cosmos, conscience, and—in the case of Jews—the law both the existence and the ethical demands of a righteous God. Such individuals subsequently despair over their inability to fulfill such onerous works, receiving with gratitude the good news that through faith alone they can appropriate Christ's satisfaction of their moral debts.⁹⁰ The focus on justification by πίστις—understood here in the sense of "belief"⁹¹—thus derives specifically from the need for an easier means of justification than the works that fail in the model's first phase.

Campbell identifies 56 intrinsic, systematic, empirical, and exegetical difficulties with this prospective, contractual, and individualistic Justification model,⁹² leading him ultimately to conclude that Paul never endorses this model but instead argues consistently out of a retrospective, unconditional, and participatory model. The most significant of these difficulties stems from the Justification model's prospective nature in which fallen humans somehow reason from their moral plight to God's solution in Christ. I find this particular critique compelling and accordingly want to note how my understanding of justification by faith differs from the model that Campbell describes. Indeed, my understanding cannot presuppose the traditional Justification model since I understand 3:6–7 to highlight the faith-based nature of righteousness in traditional *Jewish* thought. Significantly, then, in these verses, πίστις does not stand in contrast to works of law, nor does it denote a purely mental "belief."⁹³

89 See Campbell, *Deliverance*, 1–466.

90 Ibid., 11–35, esp. 28–29.

91 Ibid., 33–34.

92 For summary, see *ibid.*, 397–410.

93 On the semantic range of πίστις, see *ibid.*, 384–86.

As Campbell notes, however, simply dismissing the prospective Justification model does not solve the problem: the derivative nature of justification by faith in the traditional framework requires that proponents of faith-based justification also provide a retrospective explanation for the focus on πίστις (as opposed to, e.g., love).⁹⁴ In this regard, I suggest that Paul derives his understanding of justification by faith not from a despair over the necessity of exacting works but from Christ's accursed death on the cross (cf. 3:13). That is to say, I will ultimately argue that the accursed nature of Christ's death under the law eliminates works of *Jewish law* as a possible basis for the justification that results in his resurrection.⁹⁵ Paul then emphasizes Christ's "trust" (πίστις) in God as the basis for this justification since 1) it has a scriptural basis; 2) Jews must similarly "trust" that God will bless them even though they die to the law to unite with Christ (cf. 2:19–20); and 3) πίστις thus emphasizes the law-free nature of the justification that comes to both Jews and gentiles.⁹⁶ This understanding of justification by faith accordingly satisfies the "retrospective" criterion that Campbell rightly contends must characterize Paul's theologizing.⁹⁷

I therefore conclude that Gal 3:6–7 constitutes a distinct argument highlighting the importance of faith-based justification for Jewish claims of Abrahamic sonship. This interpretation builds on the lexico-syntactical evidence suggesting an argument from Abraham's example and accords well with the letter's later portrayal of Abrahamic descent in terms of genealogy / incorporation. It also resolves the many other theological and contextual issues that arise if,

94 Ibid., 27. Campbell criticizes scholars who dismiss the first phase of Justification theory—e.g., by rightly questioning the theory's portrayal of Judaism as a legalistic monolith—but who nevertheless continue to promote justification by faith. See pp. 427–28 (against Watson), 436 (against Sanders), and 454 (against Dunn).

95 See pp. 114–22.

96 Campbell explains Paul's privileging of πίστις terminology by appealing to the scriptural precedents that enable a wordplay associating Christ's "fidelity" with the believer's participatory "faith" (Campbell, *Deliverance*, 618–19).

97 My reading also aligns with Campbell's call for a participatory reading of Paul's justification language. It does not, however, endorse Campbell's case for an unconditional soteriological model, i.e., my reading remains contractual. If salvation requires no human response, then statements such as Gal 5:4—"you have been severed from Christ, whichever of you are being justified by law"—seem incomprehensible. The punitive, nonuniversal tendencies of Paul's gospel also become hard to reconcile with a good and just God in an unconditional reading. Campbell acknowledges these tendencies in Paul (e.g., *ibid.*, 93–94) and can only suggest that they perhaps conflict with the true implications of the gospel.

as traditionally assumed, the verses instead seek to establish a christological, gentile-inclusive understanding of Abrahamic sonship. Potential objections to this reading based on the emphatic form of 3:7, the focus on gentiles in 3:5 and 3:8–9, and/or the inclusion of gentiles in Abraham's seed prove insubstantial upon closer inspection. Even the lack of attestation in the history of interpretation has a plausible explanation. To complete the case for this interpretation of 3:6–7, however, I must still show how these verses function in the larger context of 3:6–14. Such is the task of Chapter 3.

Transgressing the Law in Faith as the New Expression of Jewish Sonship in Gal 3:6–14

Redefining Jewish Sonship, Step 1: Abraham's Jewish Sons Must Share His Justifying Faith (3:6–7)

The previous chapter argued that Gal 3:6–7 identifies justification by faith as an essential component of *Jewish* claims to Abrahamic sonship. Understood in this way, Gal 3:6–7 presumes the traditional understanding of Abrahamic sonship. Christ, however, does not leave the Jews' Abrahamic sonship untouched. Indeed, by the end of 3:14, Paul has christologically redefined the justifying faith that, according to 3:6–7, qualifies the Jews as Abrahamic sons. No longer are Jews to express their justifying faith through law observance; now they prove themselves worthy sons of Abraham by faithfully transgressing the law to rejoin the nations.

This chapter investigates the movement from the traditional understanding of Abrahamic sonship in 3:6–7 to the rather startling implications for that sonship in 3:14b. In short, I suggest that, having established that the Jews' Abrahamic sonship requires justifying faith in 3:6–7, Paul next argues in 3:8–10 that God similarly justifies the gentiles by faith, albeit a faith that does not—indeed cannot—find expression in law observance. Given this distinction between faith and law observance, Gal 3:11–12 identifies faith as the essential component for the Jews' justification as well. Galatians 3:13–14 then concludes the argument chiasmatically, providing a christological twist to each of the preceding premises: through his accursed death on the cross, Christ severs Jewish faith from law observance, thereby enabling him to bring the promised Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles, which in turn enables the Jews to receive that blessing (i.e., the Spirit) by rejoining the nations. The argument thus grounds this new understanding of the Jews' Abrahamic sonship in the interdependence of Jews and gentiles in Christ.

Since this step-by-step argument depends on interpreting the first step correctly, it should not be surprising that scholars who understand 3:6–7 as incorporating gentiles into Abraham's lineage typically propose problematical interpretations of 3:8–14 as well. This chapter accordingly proceeds through the three remaining sections of the argument: 3:8–10, 3:11–12, and 3:13–14. In

each case, it demonstrates how the proposed reading makes better sense of the text than more traditional attempts.

Step 2: God Justifies the Gentiles by a Faith Not Expressed in Law Observance (3:8–10)

Gal 3:8–10

^{8a}προϊδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφή ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεὸς ^bπροεσηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι Ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. ⁹ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογούνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ. ^{10a}δοσοὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν· γέγραπται ἡ γὰρ ὅτι Ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά.

^{8a}*And Scripture, having foreseen that God justifies the gentiles based on faith, ^bpreached the gospel beforehand to Abraham: “All the nations will be blessed with you.” ⁹Therefore, the ones [who are justified] based on faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham, ^{10a}for as many as are [justified] based on works of law are under a curse. ^bFor it is written “Cursed [is] everyone who does not abide by all that is written in the book of the law, to do them.”*

Galatians 3:8 finally makes one of the letter’s core theological principles explicit: God justifies the gentiles based on πίστις.¹ Curiously, however, this fundamental tenet receives no special emphasis, appearing instead in a subordinate clause. Moreover, although the claim in 3:8a clearly represents Paul’s interpretation of the ensuing citation, the citation itself says nothing about justification or πίστις, speaking instead about the blessing of Abraham. In fact, the only element that Paul’s interpretation has in common with his citation is a reference to τὰ ἔθνη, the nations/gentiles. Adding to the apparent oddity, the argument’s conclusion (ὥστε) in 3:9 mentions neither the gentiles nor justification but instead draws an inference connecting οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to Abraham’s blessing.

1 I leave πίστις untranslated because my argument here does not depend on whether the term refers to the “faith” of the gentiles or to the “faithfulness” of Christ, Abraham, or God. For ἐκ πίστεως in 3:8 as a reference to Christ’s faithfulness, see Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 86; to Abraham’s or God’s faithfulness, see Hays, *Faith*, 176. Curiously, these scholars both ascribe a different primary significance to ἐκ πίστεως in 3:8 than they ascribe to οἱ ἐκ πίστεως—Abraham’s faithfulness, Johnson Hodge / Christ’s faithfulness, Hays—in 3:7, 9.

How does the scriptural promise to Abraham that the gentiles will be blessed ἐν σοί (3:8b) presume that God justifies the gentiles based on πίστις (3:8a) and lead to the conclusion that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with the faithful Abraham (3:9)? Scholars typically solve both of these problems with a single exegetical move: they assert that the argument simply equates πίστις-based justification with the Abrahamic blessing. This assumption enables the citation to prove Paul's claim about the gentiles in 3:8a while at the same time transforming the conclusion about blessing in 3:9 into a more expected claim about justification. Since blessing has no inherent connection to πίστις-based justification or even to justification more broadly, Abraham must then provide the crucial link uniting the two concepts. Thus, whether as example or progenitor, Abraham becomes the key to showing that God justifies the gentiles based on πίστις.

This perceived focus on Abraham in 3:8–9 usually has the indirect effect of severing 3:10 from its preceding context since, despite the initial γάρ in 3:10, this latter verse shifts the focus from Abraham's blessing to the law's curse. Of course, the exact nature of the argument in 3:10 has largely perplexed scholars ever since pioneers of the New Perspective first began questioning the reality of a legalistic Judaism that demanded perfection. Nevertheless, however they understand the basis for 3:10, scholars do largely agree that it is not Abraham, hence the paragraph break that almost always occurs after 3:9.²

At first glance, this identification of 3:8–9 as part of a continuing (or additional) “argument from Abraham” seems to accord well with the surrounding context. The many parallels between 3:6–7 and 3:8–9—both cite scriptures that refer to Abraham, both identify people whom God justifies based on πίστις, and both conclude by drawing implications for the relation of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to Abraham—appear to support both the close connection between the two passages and the Abrahamic focus in 3:8–9. This Abrahamic focus seems especially appropriate if, as most interpreters assume, 3:8–9 either presupposes or proves the gentiles' Abrahamic sonship purportedly established in 3:6–7.

Such an interpretation, however, creates several exegetical problems. For instance, Chapter 2 has already argued that 3:6–7 in no way ascribes Abrahamic sonship to gentiles, thereby undermining a key support for an Abrahamic focus in 3:8–9. Similarly, I suggest that 3:10 perplexes interpreters precisely because

2 For two scholars who (in different ways) do relate the argument in 3:10 to Abraham and therefore identify 3:8–10 as a unit, see Kjell Arne Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians: Paul Confronts Another Gospel* (ESEC; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 103; Jeffrey R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law: Paul's Citation of Genesis and Deuteronomy in Gal 3.8–10* (WUNT 2 / 133; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). I will discuss their views later in the chapter.

they have not properly understood Paul's argument in 3:8–9. Although they often go unnoted, unsustainable assumptions and illogical arguments fill the scholarship on 3:8–9 as well, beginning with the problematical assumption that Paul equates justification and blessing.

This section accordingly argues that, when read as a unit, 3:8–10 argues from scripture—i.e., not from Abraham—for the faith-based justification of the gentiles, a conclusion that parallels the similar conclusion for Jews in 3:6–7. Galatians 3:8–10, however, has an additional twist, establishing that, in the gentiles' case, this justifying faith cannot find expression in Jewish law observance. Before making this positive argument, I will first detail the problems that arise in the standard interpretations of these three verses.

Problems with 3:8–9 as an Argument from Abraham

Each verse in 3:8–10 presents a different exegetical challenge. Interpretations of verse 8 must explain how the scriptural promise to Abraham that the gentiles will be blessed ἐν σοί (3:8b) presumes that God justifies the gentiles based on πίστις (3:8a). Interpretations of verse 9 must explain how (and why) Paul reaches the conclusion that this verse draws. Finally, interpretations of verse 10 must explain why as many as are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are under a curse. As the following analysis shows, interpreting 3:8–9 as a discrete argument from Abraham fails to provide tenable answers to any of these questions.

Problems Deriving the Gentiles' πίστις-Based Justification from Abraham in 3:8

Galatians 3:8 raises the critical exegetical question of how the scriptural promise to bless the gentiles ἐν [Ἀβραάμ] (3:8b) presumes (and thus proves) that God justifies the gentiles based on πίστις (3:8a).³ Paul's interpretation in 3:8a clearly focuses on the τὰ ἔθνη in the ensuing citation: we know that God justifies the *gentiles* based on πίστις because the citation explicitly mentions *gentiles*. We can thus focus the question more precisely: how does the blessing ἐν Ἀβραάμ necessarily imply the πίστις-based justification of its gentile recipients? Logically, the implication could result from the full "blessing ἐν [Ἀβραάμ]," but it could also follow from either of the two elements considered individually,

3 Contra Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988), 50: "The idea that God justifies the Gentiles by faith [3:8a] serves here as a piece of common ground in an argument whose interest lies elsewhere." Paul needs to establish the gentiles' πίστις-based justification, not argue from it.

i.e., from being in Abraham or from the blessing. I will consider each of these possibilities in turn.

By far, most interpreters assume that Paul simply equates justification ἐκ πίστεως in 3:8a with the Abrahamic blessing in 3:8b.⁴ This assumption then produces the following syllogism:

[A. The blessing ἐν Ἀβραάμ is justification ἐκ πίστεως]

B. Gentiles are blessed ἐν Ἀβραάμ (3:8b)

Therefore, C. Gentiles are justified ἐκ πίστεως (3:8a)⁵

Since blessing is not inherently synonymous with justification, Abraham must provide the crucial link uniting the two concepts.⁶

The implicit nature of the major premise in this construal creates a substantial problem. As Betz notes, ancient Judaism understood the Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles in a variety of ways: as the maintenance of creation, as grace, as monotheism, as penitence, as proselytism, as scientific knowledge, even as cultural achievement.⁷ In light of this diversity, Paul could certainly have come to a different understanding of the blessing, but he would then also need to

4 E.g., Williams, "Justification," 95–96; Vanhoye, "Pensée," 108; Betz, *Galatians*, 142; Hansen, *Galatians*, 91. Chee-Chiew Lee, *The Blessing of Abraham, the Spirit, and Justification in Galatians: Their Relationship and Significance for Understanding Paul's Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2013), 183–85, grounds this connection in the Abrahamic blessing's "redemptive purpose of restoring the relationship between God and humankind" (185). Cosgrove, *Cross*, 50–51, represents a welcome rare dissenting voice: "The tendency among interpreters to equate the themes of sonship, blessing, and promise with 'justification by faith' belies Paul's careful use of this terminology. . . . He never equates the blessing (promise or inheritance) with justification." See, too, Friedrich Sieffert, *Der Brief an die Galater* (9th, rev. ed.; KEK 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), 175–76.

5 Cf. Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 156. He also proposes an alternative syllogism: A. All those who are blessed (in Abraham) are justified by God; B. All gentiles are blessed (in Abraham) by God; Therefore, C. the (believing) gentiles are justified by God. As the parentheses indicate, however, this alternative syllogism cannot account for the identification of πίστεως as the basis for the gentiles' justification.

6 The blessing itself could consist either of justification ἐκ πίστεως or, in a slightly different construal, of justification alone, with ἐν Ἀβραάμ then necessitating the πίστεως-based nature of this justification. In a potentially significant difference between the two construals, relating the blessing to justification alone allows for the possibility that justification forms the prerequisite for rather than the content of the blessing. Proving that a blessing would require a particular kind of justification seems more difficult.

7 Betz, *Galatians*, 142. For detailed analysis of the Abrahamic blessing in Second Temple texts, see Lee, *Blessing*, 137–60.

argue for such an understanding if he hoped to persuade the Galatians. If the case for the πίστις-based justification of gentiles in 3:8 *assumes* the identification of the Abrahamic blessing with justification, then it begs the question. Refuting it would require only that the agitators deny this novel and unsupported identification.⁸

A focus on Abraham as the crucial link between blessing and justification also seems misplaced given the likely source of Paul's citation and the difficulty of discerning a contextually coherent argument from Abraham. Beginning with the citation, three OT texts—Gen 12:3, 18:18, and 22:18—serve as potential sources for Gal 3:8b:

Gal 3:8b	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ἐν σοι	πάντα τὰ ἔθνη
Gen 12:3	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ἐν σοι	πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς
Gen 18:18	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ἐν αὐτῷ	πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς
Gen 22:18	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου	πάντα τὰ ἔθνη [τῆς γῆς] ⁹

In light of Abraham's importance to Paul's purported argument, most scholars conclude that Gal 3:8b conflates Gen 12:3 and 18:18, the two texts that associate this blessing with Abraham as opposed to his seed. As E. P. Sanders notes, the argumentative necessity for the underlying text to include τὰ ἔθνη then requires that Gen 18:18 be Paul's primary source; otherwise, the argument would again beg the question.¹⁰ Furthermore, only Gen 18:18 incorporates all three elements of Paul's citation: blessing, Abraham, and the nations/gentiles. These observations would solve the problem were it not for Paul's explicitly drawing attention to the fact that scripture proclaimed this promise *to Abraham*

8 E.g., the suggestion of Schreiner, *Galatians*, 194–95, that Paul effectively imposes Gen 15:6 on Gen 12:3 even though “Nothing in the words of Gen 12:3 forecasted that Gentiles would be blessed in Abraham by believing” would require little effort to refute.

9 Max Wilcox, “‘Upon the Tree’—Deut 21:22–23 in the New Testament,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 85–99, 96 n. 46, notes that the omission of τῆς γῆς has better LXX manuscript support than its inclusion, an observation that further supports my eventual conclusion that Gal 3:8 cites Gen 22:18.

10 Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 21. Contra, e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 199, and de Boer, *Galatians*, 194–95, both of whom suggest that Paul improves the relevance of Gen 12:3 by importing the reference to gentiles. Although Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, identify the citation as Gen 18:18 in their discussion of 3:8–9 (203), they state in their discussion of 3:13–14 that Paul uses the language of τὰ ἔθνη to refer to fellow (diaspora) Israelites throughout the passage because of *his citation of Gen 12:3* (205). This confusion exposes a major weakness in their argument: had Paul truly been referring to diaspora Israelites, the actual *πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ* of Gen 12:3 would have conveyed this sense much better!

(προευγγερίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ, Gal 3:8b), a criterion that effectively eliminates Gen 18:18 from consideration.¹¹

In fact, the post-*Aqedah* reiteration and confirmation of God's promises in Gen 22:18 best matches the context in Galatians. Unlike Gen 12:3, 22:18 contains the crucial reference to τὰ ἔθνη that links the citation to Paul's interpretation in Gal 3:8a; unlike Gen 18:18, it is actually proclaimed to Abraham. Of course, also unlike the other two options, Gen 22:18 focuses on Abraham's seed rather than on Abraham himself. Even Paul's ἐν σοί, however, has some justification in this OT verse: his ensuing interpretation of ἐν σοί as the blessing of those ἐκ πίστεως "with the *faithful* Abraham" (σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ, Gal 3:9) seems to allude to the premise in Gen 22:18 that the Lord will bless the nations because of Abraham's *obedience*.¹²

The surrounding context in Galatians thus points to Gen 22:18 as Paul's primary text. This conclusion accordingly indicates that—assuming the ἐν σοί does not reflect a variant *Vorlage*—Paul has imported the reference to Abraham. While the primary linking of Abraham with this blessing to the gentiles in Gen 12:3 and 18:18 affirms the contextual integrity of this substitution, it nevertheless creates an awkward situation if the imported reference to Abraham forms the linchpin of Paul's argument. The citation in 3:8b therefore argues against a proof based on Abraham.

Trying to discern a contextually coherent explanation for an Abrahamic connection between blessing and πίστις-based justification also proves difficult. The phrase ἐν σοί could ground this connection in Abraham in one of two ways: it could base the gentiles' justification ἐκ πίστεως on Abraham's example or on his status as genealogical forebear. Neither option produces a very compelling argument.

Advocates for an example-based interpretation typically contend that Paul is countering the agitators' argument that gentiles must be circumcised to inherit the blessing "in Abraham." In other words, Paul challenges the agitators' position by interpreting ἐν σοί not, as the agitators would, in a genealogical/locative sense ("in you") but as an appeal to Abraham's defining example ("by virtue of your establishment of the principle of justification by faith").¹³ This

11 Scott W. Hahn, "Covenant, Oath, and the Aqedah: Διαθήκη in Galatians 3:15–18," *CBQ* 67 (2005): 79–100, 92 n. 64. Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), 106, 108, who also identifies the citation as a conflation of Gen 12:3 and 22:18.

12 Moo, *Galatians*, 199–200, discounts Gen 22:18 as a potential source because of its connection with Abraham's obedience.

13 Fung, *Galatians*, 139–40; Burton, *Galatians*, 161.

appeal to the agitators' position has the advantage of explaining Paul's otherwise curious focus on blessing rather than justification in 3:9. For further support, adherents of this view point to the parallel *σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ* (interpreted as "with the *believing* Abraham") in 3:9 and the similar appeal in 3:6. It would strengthen the argument even more if Paul regards Abraham as a gentile in Gen 15:6, but the failure to make such a crucial point explicit—in contrast to Rom 4:9–12—argues against this line of thought in 3:8.¹⁴

Despite these seeming strengths, this proposed scenario makes little sense in the context of Galatians. For example, it acknowledges that, under the influence of the agitators, the Galatians will understand *ἐν σοί* in a locative/genealogical sense. Paul's failure to clarify his alternative interpretation thus renders it questionable whether his audience would even understand this argument, let alone find it a persuasive rebuttal. Furthermore, 3:27–29 does effectively incorporate the gentile Galatian believers into Christ, the sole seed of Abraham. For Paul to deny the necessity of incorporation into Abraham—as opposed to arguing that the Galatians are already "in Abraham" through Christ—would therefore require that Paul had abandoned a more straightforward argument from the gentiles' incorporation into Christ (cf. *ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου* in Gen 22:18) in order to import a more problematical and obscure argument from Abraham.

In truth, 3:8 seems unlikely to ground the gentiles' *πίστις*-based justification in Abraham's example under any scenario. As noted above, proponents of an example-based argument render *σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ* in 3:9 as "with the *believing* Abraham," but *πιστός* customarily means "faithful" or "trustworthy," not "believing." Although LSJ does list "believing" as a second, significantly less frequent meaning of *πιστός*,¹⁵ the common primary meaning—a meaning that accords well with Abraham's faithfulness in the context of Gen 22:18—undermines the proposed parallel with Abraham's faith-based justification in Gal 3:6.¹⁶ Had Paul intended to reference Abraham's justification as an

14 So Burton, *Galatians*, 161. Burton does, however, suggest that Paul could have in view the context of Gen 12:3 in which Abraham finds "divine acceptance" (i.e., justification) by responding to God's call in faith (cf. Heb 11:8). Against this contextual reading, I have already argued that Gal 3:8 refers primarily to Gen 22:18, not Gen 12:3. Furthermore, the citation of Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6 has just established an event subsequent to Gen 12:3 as the basis for Abraham's justification.

15 LSJ, "*πιστός*," 1408, meaning B.

16 Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 167: "[The use of *πιστῷ*] could easily have been understood as a concession to the more traditional view he was in process of contesting—that the promised blessing was conditional on Abraham's faithfulness when tested in the offering of Isaac . . . But for some reason he saw no danger in speaking of Abraham's faithfulness."

example, he could easily have avoided any potential confusion by using the participle πιστεύοντι instead.

Interpretations grounding the gentiles' πίστις-based justification in an incorporative/genealogical understanding of ἐν σοί fare little better. These readings characteristically view Abrahamic sonship as the middle term linking faith (3:7) with blessing/justification (3:8b). Essentially, these arguments take the form:

- A. All sons of Abraham are justified ἐκ πίστεως (3:7)
- B. All the gentiles who are in Abraham (3:8b) are sons of Abraham
- Therefore, C. All the gentiles who are in Abraham are justified ἐκ πίστεως (3:8a)¹⁷

The blessing's reappearance in the inference of 3:9 and in 3:14a challenges its irrelevance in this construal. More tellingly, since Abraham's seed is the one into whom the gentiles are actually incorporated (cf. 3:29), an incorporative appeal makes it even harder to account for the substitution of ἐν σοί for ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in Gen 22:18.

Finally, neither an appeal to Abraham's example nor, especially, an appeal to his status as genealogical forebear can explain why Paul glosses the ἐν in his citation simply as σύν ("with") in 3:9.¹⁸ Admittedly, these interpretations of 3:8 can both make sense of the generic "with Abraham," but therein lies a problem. If Paul's argument hinges on the role of Abraham, then we would expect him to indicate the direction of his argument more clearly. That is to say, why does 3:9 not refer definitively to Abraham's example or to the gentiles' status in Christ if one of those points constitutes the likely contested basis of the argument? We should prefer an explanation of Paul's argument that can better account for (or at least marginalize) this ambiguous phrase.

Paul saw "no danger" because he was, in fact, referring to Abraham's faithfulness in the *Aqedah*.

17 Cf. Williams, *Galatians*, 87–88, who interprets the logic as follows: A. God's blessing is justification (3:8); B. "in Abraham" signifies "sons of Abraham"; C. People become sons of Abraham "by faith" (3:7); therefore, by a kind of word substitution, D. "blessed in [Abraham]" signifies "justified by faith." Logically, this argument does not work: no step makes the blessing in Abraham / as a son of Abraham dependent on how one becomes a son of Abraham. The C line would accordingly need to claim that sons of Abraham are *justified* by faith, a modification that would then render the blessing superfluous.

18 Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 165, who argues that the switch to σύν . . . Ἀβραάμ suggests that Paul does not intend to emphasize the ἐν σοί construction at this point in his argument.

In short, the surrounding context—particularly the conclusion in 3:9—suggests that Paul's inference of the gentiles' πίστις-based justification in 3:8 does not depend on either an exemplary or an incorporative appeal to Abraham. The apparent importing of Abraham (ἐν σοί) into the citation of Gen 22:18 points to this conclusion as well. It points to this conclusion in the case of an exemplary appeal because an argument based on Abraham would then beg the question; in the case of an incorporative appeal, because the reference to Abraham replaces a reference to the seed (ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου) into whom the gentiles are actually incorporated. These indications of a non-Abrahamic argument then undermine the common assumption that 3:8 implicitly equates—based on Abraham—the blessing ἐν Ἀβραάμ with justification ἐκ πίστεως, an equation whose novelty in the ancient world further erodes its plausibility.

Given the problematical nature of these construals that focus on Abraham's role, we should consider the possibility that Paul's assertion of the gentiles' πίστις-based justification instead derives solely from the fact that the gentiles are blessed. Ernest De Witt Burton identifies two potential grounds for such a scenario: the πίστις-based nature of the gentiles' justification in 3:8a could stem from the practical reality of the gentiles' having received the Spirit ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως (cf. 3:5), or it could stem from the gentiles' nature as those not under law.¹⁹ It will be helpful at this point to discuss the problems with the former option.

Interpreters typically construe an experience-based explanation of the gentiles' πίστις-based justification in 3:8a as follows. The Galatians' reception of the Spirit ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως provides a visible sign that they have received the Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles. This visible sign then also indicates the associated but unobservable reality that the Galatians have been justified ἐκ πίστεως, either as part of the Abrahamic blessing or as its prerequisite. Hence, God's promise to bless the gentiles ἐν Ἀβραάμ (3:8b) proves through its fulfillment that God justifies the gentiles ἐκ πίστεως (3:8a), a result then projected back into the Abrahamic story and identified as the initial motivation for the promise.²⁰

Burton considers this construal to provide the most compelling explanation of Paul's reasoning.²¹ Nothing in 3:8, however, explicitly suggests an appeal to the Galatians' experience. At the very least, then, the thoroughly implicit nature of this argument would render it unlikely to persuade those who were not already convinced of Paul's position. In fact, the inference in 3:8a that God

19 Burton, *Galatians*, 161.

20 Ibid., 161–62. Cf. Hansen, *Galatians*, 89–90; Witherington, *Grace*, 228–29.

21 Burton, *Galatians*, 161.

justifies *the gentiles* ἐκ πίστεως even argues against this implicit appeal because an experience-based argument would obviate the need for this generic inference. That is to say, Paul presumably makes a case for the gentiles' πίστις-based justification because of its implications for the gentile Galatians. If the argument instead derives from the Galatians' experience, then generalizing the principle to encompass all gentiles would serve no discernible purpose. Paul could instead directly infer that God has justified "you"—i.e., the Galatians—ἐκ πίστεως.

The Abrahamic nature of the blessing presents a problem for this reading as well. Although Paul does seem to identify the Spirit with the Abrahamic blessing (cf. 3:14), 3:8 itself does not provide any clear grounds for interpreting the Galatians' reception of the Spirit as the blessing that comes specifically ἐν Ἀβραάμ. Significantly, the implication of the Galatians' justification by faith in 3:1–5 cannot ground the Spirit's identification with the Abrahamic blessing since, in this construal of 3:8, the promised blessing (3:8b) does not imply the gentiles' justification by faith (3:8a) apart from this identification. If anything, 3:14 suggests that Christ would form the middle term connecting the Spirit to the Abrahamic blessing, but an implicit reference to Christ in 3:8 seems unlikely given the replacement of ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in Gen 22:18 with ἐν σοί in Gal 3:8b.²²

These problems that arise when trying to relate 3:8a to 3:8b based on Abraham or on the Galatians' reception of the Spirit suggest that we should turn to the second of Burton's blessing-focused proposals: the justification presupposed by the blessing of gentiles must be ἐκ πίστεως because the gentiles are not under law. Although Burton finds this option unlikely given the agitators' ability to appeal to the Abrahamic circumcision requirement in Gen 17,²³ I contend that Gal 3:9–10 provides an explicit defense of this position that effectively undermines the force of Burton's objection. I will explain this

22 Williams, "Justification," 95–96, associates the Spirit with the Abrahamic blessing on the grounds that ἐν σοί in 3:8b identifies the gentiles as Abraham's children. Given the subsequent description of Isaac as one born "according to Spirit" (4:29), this identification thus alludes to their reception of the Spirit. This proposed allusion, however, seems too subtle to constitute the primary basis for Paul's claim in 3:8. Furthermore, by qualifying the gentiles as Abraham's children, the Spirit essentially becomes a prerequisite for the blessing rather than the blessing itself. Finally, I will argue in Part II that the gentiles become sons of God—not Abraham—through the Spirit (cf. 4:6); they subsequently become sons of Abraham through their baptism into Christ (3:29). For the reference to Isaac as one born according to the Spirit, see pp. 316–23 below.

23 Burton, *Galatians*, 161.

interpretation more fully after illustrating the further difficulties that result when interpreters do not understand 3:9 and 3:10 in this way.

Problems Determining the Function of the Conclusion in 3:9

Galatians 3:9 claims that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with the faithful Abraham. The opening ὥστε indicates that this claim in 3:9 serves as an inference derived from the preceding verse(s). Scholars disagree on the precise scope of this argument, i.e., whether the ὥστε looks back to 3:6–8, 3:7–8, or simply 3:8. Nevertheless, they do widely agree that 3:9 concludes Paul's argument from Abraham since the ensuing verse (3:10) instead appeals to a Deuteronomic citation to make a point about those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. Thus, despite the γάρ that links 3:9 and 3:10, most interpreters insert a paragraph break after 3:9.²⁴ A consideration of the function of 3:9 shows why this break is so problematical.

As in 3:7, the inference in 3:9 could function either to redefine those who receive the Abrahamic blessing or to highlight a crucial characteristic of the recipients. The former option would expand the scope of the Abrahamic blessing: "Therefore, everyone who is ἐκ πίστεως is blessed with Abraham." This conclusion would either emphasize the inclusion of gentiles among the blessing's recipients or broaden the blessing's beneficiaries inductively based on the gentiles' reception. Regardless, the focus on blessing and the required presumption of the gentiles' status as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως seem odd in a letter primarily arguing against a misconception of the gentiles' righteous status. We would instead expect the gentiles' reception of the blessing to produce a conclusion about their justification. This redefinition would also result in a circular argument since 3:8 seems to derive the gentiles' status as those justified ἐκ πίστεως (3:8a) from their promised reception of the Abrahamic blessing (3:8b).

Alternatively, 3:9 could highlight justification ἐκ πίστεως as a crucial characteristic of the gentiles who, according to 3:8, are blessed in Abraham: "Therefore, it is those gentiles who are justified ἐκ πίστεως who receive the Abrahamic blessing." I will ultimately argue for this reading, but it works only if the argument extends through 3:10. Otherwise, if 3:10 begins a new phase in the argument, then 3:9 essentially summarizes 3:8 without explaining the crucial controversial claim that reception of the Abrahamic blessing entails God's πίστις-based justification of the gentiles.²⁵

Not surprisingly given this analysis, interpreters struggle to find a coherent, contextually relevant argument that concludes in 3:9. A few scholars seek to derive 3:9 from the combination of Abrahamic texts cited in 3:6 and 3:8b.

²⁴ E.g., NA²⁷.

²⁵ See pp. 64–72.

Although the proposed syllogisms exhibit varying degrees of logical sophistication and accuracy, the basic premises appear most simply as:

- A. The blessing in Abraham is justification by faith (3:6)
- B. All the nations/gentiles are blessed in Abraham (3:8b)

These premises lead to the conclusion that the gentiles are justified by faith. The preceding discussion of 3:8 has already highlighted the difficulties inherent in the equating of blessing and justification that appears in the A line. Here I simply note that 3:9 does not, in fact, draw the expected conclusion that “gentiles are justified by faith.” Rather, it proclaims that “οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with Abraham.”²⁶

Several scholars accordingly seek to explain the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως instead by appealing to the identical phrase in 3:7, again essentially arguing that a syllogistic logic unites 3:7–9. Unfortunately, the claims “οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are sons of Abraham” (3:7) and “the gentiles will be blessed in Abraham” (3:8b) do not combine to yield the conclusion “οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with Abraham” (3:9).²⁷

26 Hübner, *Law*, 17, derives his proposed conclusion from the syllogism, meaning that it differs from Paul's conclusion in 3:9. Fung, *Galatians*, 140, arrives at the conclusion in 3:9, but that conclusion does not proceed logically from the proposed premises. Dunn, *Galatians*, 166, also arrives at Paul's conclusion, but how the two citations lead him to this result remains obscure: “The link provided by the first scripture (promise, seed, faith), when added to the link provided by the second (promise, blessing, Gentiles), pointed clearly[!] to the conclusion that the blessing of Abraham came to the faith of Abraham, and thus to those who shared that faith.”

27 George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 149, nevertheless seems to describe Paul's argument in this way. Needless to say, he concludes that the “whole labored argument” of 3:6–18 rests more on Paul's personal authority than on logic. Cf., too, Martyn, *Galatians*, 302; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 222. Matera, *Galatians*, 123, constructs the following logical chain by inserting references to gentiles where Paul has none: A. “The Gentiles[!] are Abraham's descendants [i.e., ‘in him’] because they are *hoi ek pisteōs*” (3:7); B. “God promised Abraham that all the Gentiles would be *blessed* in him” (3:8); C. “Therefore, the Gentiles[!] are *blessed* with Abraham because they are *hoi ek pisteōs*” (3:9). The lack of a causal connection in B renders this chain invalid; B would need to establish either that all who are in Abraham are blessed or that gentiles are blessed *because* they are in Abraham. Matera's concluding summary that the gentiles' membership in “the community of faith” assures them of their share in the Abrahamic blessing also seems misplaced: the citation in 3:8 alone establishes their share, and even if Paul wanted to elaborate, the key point would be *that* the gentiles are “in Abraham,” not *why* (faith) they are in Abraham. Morland, *Rhetoric*, 199, similarly constructs an invalid syllogism: A. “In thee

Completing the logical chain would accordingly require the implicit premise that “All sons of Abraham are gentiles.”²⁸ Even overlooking the awkwardness of assuming the gentile status of all Abraham’s sons to prove their blessedness, such a radical premise would surely need to be stated clearly and defended vigorously for the argument to be comprehensible, let alone persuasive.

Alternatively, the implied premise that “All sons of Abraham are blessed in Abraham” could produce the conclusion in 3:9 directly from the claim in 3:7.²⁹ This construal, however, would render the intervening reference to the gentiles—indeed, all of 3:8—completely irrelevant, an implausible solution given the repetition of the previously unmentioned blessing theme in 3:8b and 3:9. Furthermore, this reading focuses the whole argument of 3:6–9 on establishing who receives the Abrahamic blessing. It therefore cannot account for the expressed logic of 3:8, according to which Paul introduces the concept of Abrahamic blessing to establish that God justifies the gentiles ἐκ πίστεως. Indeed, since the citation expressly establishes the gentiles’ participation in Abraham’s blessing, their justification ἐκ πίστεως serves no purpose in this construal.

Galatians 3:9 therefore seems likely to derive its inference from 3:8 apart from 3:6–7.³⁰ Although the claims in 3:8–9 could form a syllogism—A. God justifies the gentiles ἐκ πίστεως (3:8a); B. The gentiles will be blessed in Abraham (3:8b); therefore, C. οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with Abraham (3:9)—the syntax that subordinates 3:8a to 3:8b undermines the suggestion of independent

(= Abraham) shall all the nations be blessed (3:8b)”; B. “Those who are men of faith are in Abraham (=3:7)”; therefore, C. “Those who are of faith are blessed (3:9a; cf. 3:8a[]).” As Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 157, points out, Morland creates a middle term (“in Abraham”) only by phrasing his major premise so that it misrepresents its true subject. The premise of 3:8b should read “All the nations are blessed in Abraham”; Morland’s syllogism instead requires the premise “All in Abraham are blessed.”

28 R. Dean Anderson, Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (rev. ed.; CBET 18; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 160, suggests the converse as the missing premise: the nations in 3:8b are Abraham’s promised sons. For this claim to complete a valid syllogism, however, it would have to be exclusive—i.e., the nations in 3:8b are Abraham’s *only* sons—thereby producing essentially the same result as the premise identified in the main text above. As Anderson himself notes of his reading, “Too much is left unstated . . . Paul’s argument [in 3:2–14] is no logical demonstration” (160–61).

29 Cf. Ellicott, *Galatians*, 71, who effectively identifies the relevant premises as A. Abraham and his children will be blessed; B. οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are Abraham’s children (3:7).

30 So, e.g., Schreiner, *Galatians*, 195; Debanné, “Enthymemes,” 9; Hansen, *Galatians*, 90; Betz, *Galatians*, 142–43; Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 100.

premises. That Paul would assume the gentiles' controversial πίστις-based justification to draw a conclusion about those blessed with Abraham also seems implausible.³¹

Two possibilities for an argument in 3:8–9 remain. If οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 comprises both Jews and gentiles, then 3:9 would build on the claim of the gentiles' πίστις-based justification in 3:8. This interpretation has little to commend it. Οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 could logically include both Jews and gentiles only if one inductively expands the logical converse of 3:8—i.e., that the gentiles' justification ἐκ πίστεως entails their receipt of the Abrahamic blessing—but a proposition does not imply its converse.³² More importantly, in this scenario, 3:8–9 appeals to the blessing of the gentiles to establish that the Jews must also be οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to receive the Abrahamic blessing.³³ Given the letter's larger concerns, Paul seems unlikely to have drawn conclusions about the Jews / Jewish Christians based on the gentile Christians' likely disputed status as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (cf. 3:8a). Even identifying a motive for such an argument proves difficult.

In contrast, a logically coherent summary of the argument in 3:8 results if οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 consists solely of gentiles.³⁴ In making this claim, I do not

31 De Boer suggests that 3:9 counters the agitators' purported claim that Abraham's blessing comes to the law observant (*Galatians*, 197), but Paul would presumably want to refute such a claim *because* of the implications for the gentiles' status, not *based on* their controversial status.

32 "If it is raining then the ground is wet" does not imply that "If the ground is wet then it is raining."

33 So Debanné, "Enthymemes," 9, who argues for the following syllogism: A. "All people are justified by God (and blessed in Abraham) in the same way" (implied); B. "The Gentiles are justified by God (and blessed in Abraham) through faith [and not law]" (3:8); therefore, C. "All people are justified by God (and blessed in Abraham) through faith [and not law]" (3:9). In addition to exhibiting the problematical equating of justification and blessing in Abraham, this construal also depends on a questionable implied premise in the A line. After all, if Paul could assume that God justifies everyone on the same basis, then the argument could have ended with Abraham's example in 3:6.

34 For the view that 3:9 concerns only gentiles, see Hans-Joachim Eckstein, *Verheißung und Gesetz: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Galater 2,15–4,7* (WUNT 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 19–20. For the suggestion that πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Gal 3:8b includes Israel since Israel was not yet a nation when the promise was given to Abraham, see Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 204; Dieter Lüthmann, *Galatians* (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Continental Commentaries; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 60. Although τὰ ἔθνη did initially include Abraham's descendants, Paul argues in 3:19, 21–22 that the law came specifically to set the Jews apart as a distinct people so that they would not be able to receive this Abrahamic blessing apart from their incorporation into Christ. See pp. 201–8 below. Accordingly,

intend to suggest that Paul thinks only gentiles could qualify as those justified ἐκ πίστεως.³⁵ Rather, I suggest that the context limits the scope of the οἱ to the previously mentioned gentiles in the same way that the context of 3:7 limits the scope of the earlier instance of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to the “sons of Abraham.” Thus, with 3:8 having affirmed that God justifies the gentiles ἐκ πίστεως, 3:9 substitutes οἱ ἐκ πίστεως for the gentiles in its paraphrase of the preceding citation.

Understood in this way, 3:9 highlights the key implication of the citation in 3:8: it is the gentiles who are justified ἐκ πίστεως who share in the Abrahamic blessing. As a final conclusion to the argument, however, this summary proves unsatisfying in two ways. First, because it essentially restates the argument in 3:8, it leaves the logic behind the presumably controversial implication in 3:8a unexpressed, making it easy for the agitators to challenge or deny. Second, the focus on the Abrahamic blessing in 3:9 remains curious. Why does Paul not simply conclude that God justifies the gentiles by faith (cf. 3:8a) if their righteousness constitutes the critical issue? Interpreters typically explain the focus on blessing in 3:9 either as rebutting the agitators’ purported emphasis on the need for circumcision to receive the blessing “in Abraham”³⁶ and/or as setting up the contrasting discussion of cursing in 3:10.³⁷ The former seems unlikely: it admits that the agitators and, hence, the Galatians do not understand “the blessing in Abraham” to imply the gentiles’ πίστις-based justification. Paul’s failure to specify his reasoning in 3:8 thus becomes inexplicable. As for the latter possibility, the blessing and cursing themes in 3:9–10 do seem intrinsically related. The reappearance of the Abrahamic blessing in 3:14a, however, suggests that this theme has more than a strictly formal significance.

I contend that extending the argument into 3:10 solves all of these problems by enabling 3:9–10 to supply the otherwise missing rationale for the gentiles’ πίστις-based justification in 3:8. That is to say, I suggest not only that this unified reading of 3:8–10 establishes the gentiles’ πίστις-based justification in 3:8 but that it also accounts both for the shift from gentiles in 3:8 to οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 and for the focus on blessing in 3:9. Before explaining this proposal in

everywhere in Galatians, τὰ ἔθνη refers—in a typically Jewish way—to gentiles in distinction from Israelites.

35 So Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 157, who notes that connecting 3:8 to 3:9 would logically require the implied premise “Alle Glaubenden sind Nichtjuden.” Finding this implied premise absurd, he instead proposes to derive 3:9 from his problematical implied conclusion to 3:6–7 (“Alle Glaubensmenschen sind Gerechtfertigte”) and the implied premise that “Alle Gerechtfertigten sind Empfänger des Abrahamssegens.”

36 Burton, *Galatians*, 162.

37 E.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 142.

greater detail, however, I first need to examine one final strand of negative evidence, namely, the interpretive problems that result when interpreters regard 3:10 as initiating a new phase in the argument.

Problems Understanding Why ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου Are under a
Curse in 3:10

Interpreters have long puzzled over the logical relationship between Paul's assertion in Gal 3:10a and its cited Deuteronomic basis in 3:10b. The former—"As many as are [righteous] based on works of law are under a curse"—seemingly condemns those who *observe* the law, while the latter—"Cursed [is] everyone who does not abide by all that is written in the book of the law, to do them"—seemingly condemns those who *fail to observe* the law. Giving Paul the benefit of the doubt both as a thinker and as an exegete precludes (at least initially) the suggestion that he loses his train of thought in so short a space. How, then, does he understand these two statements to cohere? A compelling explanation should result in 1) a logical argument that 2) fits the historical context, 3) accounts for the γάρ linking 3:10 to 3:9, and 4) explains Paul's choice of Deut 27:26 as a justifying citation. Interpreters have essentially identified five main ways of construing the logic in 3:10, none of which satisfies all four points.³⁸

For instance, J. Louis Martyn proposes that Paul's "exegesis" in 3:10a describes the status of Jews (those who obey) while the citation of Deut 27:26 describes the status of gentiles (those who do not obey).³⁹ This proposal runs roughshod over the γάρ between the two clauses and leaves Paul asserting the very point he would need to prove. Naturally, Martyn attributes the odd logic of this "argument" to the fact that Paul wants to co-opt the Teachers' use of Deut 27:26, but co-opting their text in such an illogical manner would only strengthen their case.

38 For helpful critiques of the various positions, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible?: A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10," *JETS* 27 (1984): 151–60; Stanley, "Curse," 482–86; James M. Scott, "For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are Under a Curse" (Galatians 3:10)," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 187–221, 188–94; A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), 145–70.

39 Martyn, *Galatians*, 311. Cf. de Boer, *Galatians*, 200–201, who suggests that Paul here responds to the agitators' universalizing application of this verse to gentiles. Vincent M. Smiles, "The Blessing of Israel and the 'Curse of the Law': A Study of Galatians 3:10–14," *SCJR* 3 (2008): 1–17, 11, 13, suggests that the law condemns both obedient and disobedient because it falsely promises life (cf. Gal 3:21), an analysis that again ignores the logic specified in 3:10.

A second type of explanation regards Torah observance itself as the curse under which ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου live. Dieter Lührmann achieves this result by suggesting that Paul reads Deut 27:26 as “Everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law is cursed to do them.”⁴⁰ Finding an instance in which doing the law is a curse, however, still does not show that everyone who does the law is under a curse. Furthermore, while this reading might be, as Lührmann notes, “linguistically possible,” it is also “logically difficult,” making it easy to refute.

Gordon Fee, in contrast, distinguishes between ὑπὸ κατάραν as a reference to Torah observance and ἐπικατάρατος as a reference to the (unrelated) penalty for Torah disobedience. In other words, ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are “under a curse” in that they must obey everything written in the book of the law lest they become cursed for disobedience.⁴¹ The brilliance of this reading lies in its distinguishing ὑπὸ κατάραν from ἐπικατάρατος, but therein lies its principle difficulty as well. The presence of the same root in both Paul’s claim and his supporting citation suggests a correlation between the two curses. This purportedly misleading suggestion of a correlation then becomes even more problematical given the radical nature of the proposed view of Torah. Indeed, the idea of God’s commandments—which Paul elsewhere describes as “holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12)—as a curse runs so contrary to typical Jewish thought that it would surely need clear and careful articulation lest the agitators convince the Galatians to dismiss it out of hand. Paul’s apparent obliviousness to this rather obvious need for care suggests that his argument proceeds in a different direction.

A third type of analysis argues for a terminological proof in 3:10. Thus, E. P. Sanders contends that Paul’s argument throughout 3:1–14 depends on keyword linkages rather than the overall semantic content of his proof texts. With regard to the claim in 3:10a that those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are cursed, Sanders suggests that it likely derives not from Deut 27:26, nor from some fundamental conviction about the law, but simply from the opposite (and primary) claim in 3:9 that those of faith are blessed. Paul then “proves” that the law brings a curse terminologically by citing Deut 27:26, the only LXX verse that contains both νόμος and ἐπικατάρατος. That the law brings a curse under different conditions in Deut 27:26 than in Gal 3:10a becomes irrelevant in light of the larger parallel that in both cases the law does, indeed, bring a curse.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lührmann, *Galatians*, 60–61.

⁴¹ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 391. Cf. Fee, *Galatians*, 117–18.

⁴² Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 20–23.

While this proposal rightly emphasizes νόμος and κατάρα / ἐπικατάρατος as the two terms shared by 3:10a and 3:10b, four considerations argue against it. First, Paul's citation does not match any known LXX manuscript, substituting πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου (cf. Deut 28:58, 29:19b, 30:10) for the typical πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ νόμου τούτου. The likelihood that this difference reflects an intentional broadening of the verse's scope and not just an otherwise unknown *Vorlage*⁴³ suggests that the citation's significance extends beyond its keywords. Second, although only Deut 27:26 unites νόμος and ἐπικατάρατος, other LXX verses do connect νόμος and κατάρα in ways that would have better supported (2 Esd 20:30) or, if a Torah citation were required, at least not have undermined (Deut 29:26) Paul's purported point.⁴⁴ Third, as Christopher Stanley observes, the curse in 3:10 cannot be a mere terminological fiction since it requires Christ's very real death to free those under it (3:13).⁴⁵ Finally, the agitators could easily refute any strictly terminological argument simply by asserting the straightforward meaning of the verse, rendering such arguments unlikely to persuade.

Whereas Sanders looks back to 3:10a to identify the key terms in Paul's citation, Heinrich Schlier looks forward to what he regards as the parallel argument contrasting faith and law obedience in 3:11–12. Accordingly, for Schlier, Paul's argument emphasizes the ποιῆσαι in Deut 27:26: the citation serves solely to link the curse to the works-based nature of the law. Paul thus pronounces a curse on all who *do* the law.⁴⁶ While this interpretation accords well with

43 For an intentional broadening, see Martin Noth, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse," in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 118–31, 119; Morland, *Rhetoric*, 208. Cf. Koch, *Schrift*, 163–65, who argues that Paul has shaped the citation to emphasize the law's written character. As Koch notes, the Church Fathers provide the earliest manuscript evidence for an alternate *Vorlage* (165).

44 2 Esdr 20:30 [MT Neh 10:30 / Eng Neh 10:29]: "[all who turned to the law of God] cursed themselves (κατηράσαντο αὐτούς) and entered into a curse (εἰσῆλθοσαν ἐν ᾧ ὀρκῷ) and an oath to walk in the law of God (τοῦ πορεύεσθαι ἐν νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ)." Deut 29:26 [Eng 29:27] states that future generations will describe the Lord's having responded to Israel's unfaithfulness by bringing "every curse that is written in the book of this law" (πάσας τὰς καταράς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τούτου). The underlying Hebrew, however, omits the reference to law: "every curse written in this book" (הַכְּתוּבָה בַּסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה). Cf. Josh 9:2 [MT/Eng 8:34]; Dan 9:11 [both OG and Theod.]. νόμος also occurs with ἀπαί in the sense of "curses" in Deut 29:19–20 [Eng 29:20–21].

45 Stanley, "Curse," 485.

46 Schlier, *Galater*, 132–33. Cf. Karl Kertelge, "Rechtfertigung" bei Paulus: Studien zur Struktur und zum Bedeutungsgehalt des paulinischen Rechtfertigungsbegriffs (NTAbh, n. F. 3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1967), 209; Hans-Jürgen van der Minde, *Schrift und Tradition bei Paulus* (Paderborner theologische Studien 3; Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976), 131.

the claim in 3:10a, it goes against the expressed wording of Deut 27:26, which curses disobedience (οὐκ ἐμμένει), not obedience. As with Sanders's proposal, the changes to the Septuagintal text and the ease with which the agitators could counter this reading make it doubtful that Paul's argument depends on such a blatant disregard of his proof text's actual meaning.

Daniel Boyarin also focuses on the τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά but, representing a fourth type of interpretation, argues that the logic is midrashic. For Boyarin, Paul imbues the otherwise superfluous expression with meaning by making it modify the entire preceding phrase: "Cursed is everyone who [precisely] by *doing* it does not uphold all that is written in the book of the law." Read in this way, the verse condemns those who merely perform ("do") the letter of the law rather than "fulfilling" all that it truly entails (cf. 5:14).⁴⁷ Even if the gentile Galatians were able to follow this peculiarly Jewish logic, however, the agitators would again be able to refute Paul's interpretation easily.

A final type of construal—the most common and most diverse—understands 3:10 to depend on syllogistic logic. In this scenario, 3:10b constitutes a major premise that, when combined with a (probably implicit) minor premise, leads to the conclusion in 3:10a. Identifying and interpreting this minor premise thus becomes the key to understanding Paul's argument.

The distinction between ὑπὸ κατάραν in the conclusion (3:10a) and ἐπικατάρατος in the major premise (3:10b) creates two possibilities for a minor premise. On the one hand, Stanley points to this distinction for evidence that ὑπὸ κατάραν in 3:10a describes only a *threatened* curse, not an *active* one.⁴⁸ The phrase thus becomes synonymous with ὑπὸ νόμον. As Moisés Mayordomo notes, this observation then leads to the following syllogism:⁴⁹

A. Law transgressors are cursed (3:10b)

B. Those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου *could* transgress the law

Therefore, C. Those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου *could* be cursed (= under a curse, 3:10a)

47 Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 139–40.

48 Stanley, "Curse," 495–500. Cf. Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 179–80; Williams, *Galatians*, 90; Normand Bonneau, "The Logic of Paul's Argument on the Curse of the Law in Galatians 3:10–14," *NovT* 39 (1997): 60–80, 73. Joseph P. Braswell, "'The Blessing of Abraham' Versus 'The Curse of the Law': Another Look at Gal 3:10–13," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 73–91, 76, comes to a similar conclusion by analyzing the argument as an enthymeme with the implied premise that "ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Jewish people) are under law." So, too, Norman H. Young, "Who's Cursed: And Why? (Galatians 3:10–14)," *JBL* 117 (1998): 79–92, 87, who argues that 3:10a requires the unexpressed condition "if they abandon any of that covenant's laws."

49 Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 160.

Since basically *any* curse text from the law could have proved this point, Paul's choice of Deut 27:26 must then indicate a desire to emphasize the comprehensive effort required to avoid actualizing the curse.⁵⁰

Although I will similarly argue that 3:10 describes a hypothetical situation, the lack of evidence that anyone in antiquity understood ὑπὸ κατάραν (or similar phrases) as a reference to a merely threatened curse weakens this particular construal.⁵¹ Even granting that ὑπὸ κατάραν could signify a threatened curse, however, the resultant possibility of receiving blessing under the law undermines the connection to 3:9. That is to say, if those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου could potentially be blessed, then 3:10 becomes irrelevant to establishing or explaining the claim in 3:9 that those ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with Abraham. The γάρ in 3:10a would then have to function adverbially, introducing a new topic.⁵² As I will argue below, the sharp antithesis established between the blessed οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 and the “under a curse” ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 3:10 suggests that the γάρ retains in its normal causal/explanatory force.

If, on the other hand, ὑπὸ κατάραν functions synonymously with ἐπικατάρατος, then logic dictates the following implied minor premise:⁵³

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- 50 Stanley, “Curse,” 500–501. Cf. Tolmie, *Persuading*, 119. Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 180 n. 155, critiques Stanley for emphasizing the difficulty of doing all the law, arguing that Paul only wants to show that “the law pronounces a curse; curse is therefore integral to law” (180). Wakefield, however, then cannot explain why Paul cites the curse text of Deut 27:26 in particular. His reading thus differs from the terminological explanations of 3:10 considered above only in that the rest of the verse becomes irrelevant rather than contradictory.
- 51 TLG lists no uses of ὑπὸ κατάραν prior to Galatians. Morland, *Rhetoric*, 201–3, can identify only three similar phrases in the extant Jewish literature—1 *En.* 98:4 (only extant in Ethiopic); Josephus, *A. J.* 4.123 (ἀραίς ἐνδῆσαι), and 18.287 (τῆς ἀρᾶς ὑποτίθεσθαι)—but they all refer to the actualization of a curse. For early interpreters who clearly read ὑπὸ κατάραν in the sense of “accursed,” see Justin, *Dial.*, 95.1.1–8; Origen, *Adnot. Deut.* 17.36.14–17; Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* 23.812.12–18; cf. Hippolytus, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 18.1–2. Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 179–80, provides a potentially stronger grounding for this interpretation of ὑπὸ κατάραν by tying it to a larger geographical metaphor in which Paul purportedly contrasts law and faith as two exclusive realms. For critique of this larger geographical metaphor, see the analysis of 3:11–12 below, esp. p. 106.
- 52 For this use, see BDAG, γάρ, 189.2. Regardless, Stanley, “Curse,” 497, is too free in his analysis: “The opening γάρ tells the reader to expect a link to what has gone before, *setting the reader to considering what sort of relationship is intended* as the content of the present verse unfolds” (emphasis added). γάρ is not an overly ambiguous conjunction: it almost always carries a causal or explanatory force in argumentative discourse.
- 53 Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 159; James D. G. Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10–14),” *NTS* 31 (1985): 523–42, 533.

A. Everyone who does not abide by all the law is cursed (3:10b)

[B. As many as are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου do not abide by all the law]

Therefore, C. As many as are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are under a curse (3:10a)

Galatians 3:10 accordingly presupposes that as many as are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου fail to do all that is written in the book of the law. This conclusion then raises an obvious question: on what basis can Paul confidently assume that those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου will fail to do all the law?

For a few scholars, Paul does not leave this minor premise unstated. Rather, he effectively makes it explicit with his claim in 3:11a that “no one is justified by law,” a claim that he then defends in 3:11b–12.⁵⁴ For 3:11a to supply the necessary premise, however, the law’s failure to justify must presume that everyone under the law will transgress it. While this connection might seem reasonable, Paul actually provides a very different ground for 3:11a: 3:11b–12 argues for the lack of justification under the law, not on the grounds that no one does all the law (3:10b), but on the grounds that the law is not ἐκ πίστεως (3:12). This “solution” therefore proves little better than the terminological arguments considered above.

If 3:11–12 does not complete the argument, then the minor premise must be implied. The historically predominant approach to 3:10 justifies this implied premise anthropologically: Paul could assume that those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου will fail to do all the law because *no one* can do all the law.⁵⁵ For some interpreters, this conclusion does not represent a logical necessity so much as

54 Michael Bachmann, “Zur Argumentation von Galater 3.10–12,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 524–44, 539–40. Cf. Debbie Hunn, “Galatians 3.10–12: Assumptions and Argumentation,” *JSNT* 37 (2015): 253–66, 261; Cosgrove, *Cross*, 54; Koch, *Schrift*, 264–68.

55 Moo, *Galatians*, 202–5; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 141–42; Das, *Paul*, 145–70; Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 158; Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 139–41; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 131–33; Hansen, *Galatians*, 93; Joachim Rohde, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (THKNT 9; Berlin: Evangelische, 1989), 141; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 94–96; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985): 245–78; Hübner, *Law*, 18–19; Oepke, *Galater*, 105; H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (trans. Harold Knight; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961). Premodern interpreters who advocate this reading include Calvin, “Galatians,” 89; Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians: Modern-English Edition* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 164; Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* (PG 61.652); Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* 23.812.12–18; Origen, *Adnot. Deut.* 17.36.14–17.

an empirical observation. In other words, even if doing all the law remains theoretically possible, the practical reality is that no one actually does do all the law.⁵⁶ Frank Thielman, for instance, suggests that Paul derives this common understanding of humanity's plight from Israel's history of failing to live up to all that the law demands.⁵⁷ Regardless of whether this principle represents a fundamental maxim or an inductive probability, the implication remains clear: since sin prevents anyone from attaining the perfect obedience that the law requires, those under the law (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) will naturally fall under its curse. This solution accounts for Paul's choice of the Septuagintal form of Deut 27:26 (which, against the MT, includes πᾶσιν) and can appeal to Gal 5:3, 14 and 6:13 for evidence that Paul's emphasis falls on the totality of the required law observance.

Nevertheless, opponents of this view rightly counter that this interpretation makes little sense in its historical context. As the rise of the New Perspective has made clear, first-century Jews did not understand Deut 27:26 to require perfect obedience.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the law's provision of atonement through the sacrificial system shows that the law itself does not anticipate perfection.⁵⁹ For Paul's argument to rest on an implied premise of such novel character would render it both unpersuasive and easily refuted. Accordingly, scholars have increasingly sought to find alternative explanations for Paul's implied premise.

If the fault does not lie with humanity, then the problem could be nomological. That is to say, Paul could affirm that those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου fail to do

56 For defense of this type of rhetorical (rather than logical) syllogism, see Morland, *Rhetoric*, 204.

57 Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 68–69, 72; Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 126–27, 276 n. 30.

58 E.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 419–28; Howard, *Crisis*, 53; Gaston, *Paul*, 65. Even some of the scholars who advocate the “perfect obedience” reading acknowledge its incongruence with Jewish theology, a discrepancy then attributable either to Paul's “fundamental misapprehension” of the relationship between law and covenant (e.g., Schoeps, *Paul*, 213–18) or to the view that Paul's “Christian convictions” required a reworking of his previous Jewish framework (e.g., Longenecker, *Triumph*, 139–40).

59 The suggestion of William J. Dumbrell, “Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant in Galatians 3:1–14,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's mission: In Honor of Peter T. O'Brien* (eds. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), 19–32, 23, that Jesus ends the Mosaic covenant and therefore removes any possibility of atonement under the law collapses because he can provide no reason why the annulment would cover only the beneficial aspects of the law.

all the law because the very nature of the law prevents it from being obeyed. Betz simply asserts a nomological reading based on Paul's claim in 3:19–25: God gave the “*Jewish Torah*”—an “inferior entity” that Betz rather arbitrarily distinguishes from God's true, fulfillable Torah—to provoke/create sin.⁶⁰ More commonly, scholars tie this interpretation to the change from the LXX's “this law” (τοῦ νόμου τούτου) to Paul's “the book of the law” (τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου). Kjell Morland, for instance, argues that this change effectively expands the scope of the prescribed material from Deuteronomy to the entire Pentateuch, with “everything written” (πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις) then serving to include the narrative and promissory portions alongside the more strictly nomistic passages. As Gal 3:8–9 establishes, this expansion includes the necessity of sharing Abraham's faith. According to Morland, however, “faith” and “law” function as irreconcilable communal identity markers for Paul; one's identity cannot be both ἐκ πίστεως and ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.⁶¹ When expanded in this way, the law therefore contains an inherent contradiction that makes it unfulfillable and brings everyone who identifies with it under a curse.⁶²

These nomological readings raise numerous problems: the necessary deconstruction of scripture's authority, the rather sinister portrayal of God and his law, and the assumed incompatibility of law and faith, to name the most significant. Paul would also surely have needed to make his reasoning more explicit for his readers just to follow—let alone accept—this argument. Even then, the agitators could refute it simply by advocating a more traditional reading of Deut 27:26. Hence, the nomological interpretation also fails to explain Paul's logic.

With broader generalities proving unsatisfactory, scholars must assume that the necessity of Paul's implied premise arises from the way in which he defines ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, fulfilling all the law, or both. It is at this point that Stanley's warning about attending to the persuasive function of Paul's words becomes particularly important.⁶³ The explanations that follow all arise out of a desire to demonstrate the conceptual coherence of Paul's argument. Indeed, the ability to demonstrate such a coherence often functions as an indication of the correctness of a given interpretation. Significantly, however, Paul considered

60 Betz, *Galatians*, 146.

61 For Morland, *Rhetoric*, 188, Paul makes this “unexpected” distinction in 2:16 and then spends the rest of Gal 2 and, especially, Gal 3 trying to make it persuasive.

62 Ibid., 208–9. So, too, Braswell, “Blessing,” 79; David John Lull, *The Spirit in Galatia: Paul's Interpretation of Pneuma as Divine Power* (SBLDS 49; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 124.

63 Stanley, “Curse,” 491. See pp. 5–6 above.

the point that “as many as are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου fail to do all that is written in the book of the law” to be so readily apparent to his audience that he did not even need to state it. Thus, proposals for any limitation of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου or redefinition of fulfilling all the law need to explain not only how the suggested changes make coherent conceptual sense within Paul’s likely worldview but also why that particular reading would have been intuitively obvious to the Galatian readers. Our great chronological and cultural distance from the historical situation can make these judgments difficult, but I suggest an important rule of thumb: in such a fiercely polemical letter, the more complicated the implied logic, the less likely a proposed solution has truly captured Paul’s thought.

Two explanations accept the traditional understanding of fulfilling all the law but seek to devise a more plausible implied premise by modifying the referent of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.⁶⁴ One notes that the mission to the gentiles necessarily involves transgressing (in the sense of “not remaining within,” οὐκ ἐμμένει) the boundaries of the law (cf. 2:11–14; 6:15–16). Accordingly, the curse of Deut 27:26 must fall on Jewish Christians who acknowledge the gentile mission. Since, however, Christ has redeemed the Jews from the curse of the law (3:13), proponents of this explanation typically regard Paul’s argument as exposing the faulty logic inherent in the agitators’ attempt to unite faith and law observance.⁶⁵ The indicative mood of εἰσὶν presents a potential problem for this scenario since Paul does not actually consider these Jewish Christians to be under a curse.⁶⁶ More importantly, this interpretation cannot explain why Paul so adamantly exhorts the gentiles not to submit to the law—even claiming that such submission would sever them from Christ (5:4)—if coming under the law really has no effect. Finally, the limiting of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου to Jewish Christians ultimately seems rather arbitrary; nothing in the text explicitly points to this conclusion.

Lloyd Gaston suggests that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν refers instead to unredeemed gentiles as those who suffer the consequences of the law without

64 Michael Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3:10 and 5:3,” *NovT* 36 (1994): 242–58, 249, simply asserts that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου identifies those who do not obey all the law, a conclusion derived primarily from his desire to avoid the implication of a need for perfect obedience.

65 Timothy G. Gombis, “The ‘Transgressor’ and the ‘Curse of the Law’: The Logic of Paul’s Argument in Galatians 2–3,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 81–93, 92; Bonneau, “Logic,” 73–74.

66 Cf. Gombis, “Transgressor,” 93: “Paul is not here claiming that this is actually something that can be done. It is impossible to incur the curse of the Law, since Christ has already absorbed its curse in his death.”

recourse to the covenantal grace that Israel enjoys.⁶⁷ That Paul would use “works of law” in an absolute sense as a shorthand designation for gentiles who were never under the law, however, seems unfathomable.⁶⁸ Significantly, Gaston himself finds this reading hard to substantiate apart from Romans, and he ultimately concludes that it represents a peculiarly Pauline perspective.⁶⁹ In other words, the agitators, at least, would have difficulty even understanding this argument. Moreover, if the law’s curse lies on gentiles alone, then the urgency with which Paul seeks to dissuade his gentile converts from entering the realm of grace that is Israel’s law again becomes inexplicable.

The remaining explanations of Paul’s logic all seek to modify what Paul means by failing to do all the law, a modification that often has corresponding implications for the identity of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. Daniel Fuller, for instance, appeals to the original Deuteronomic context, arguing that Deut 27:26 curses only those who fail to “confirm” or “uphold” (לֹא־יָקִים) the law. In other words, the verse does not describe minor indiscretions but a basic stance towards the law. He then suggests that “works of the law” must signify instances of law observance (such as legalistic attempts to earn God’s approval) that incur the curse of Deut 27:26 by effectively undermining the law’s very foundations.⁷⁰ The LXX text that Paul cites makes this interpretation harder to sustain (οὐκ ἐμμένει, “not remain within”). Furthermore, the citation emphasizes that the way one does “remain within” the law is precisely by “doing” all that is written (τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά). One must therefore import any condemnation of legalism into the argument, a step that neither the literary context of Galatians nor the historical context of first-century Judaism warrants.

Appealing to the wider covenantal context of Deut 27–32,⁷¹ James Scott and N. T. Wright both suggest that Paul’s citation of Deut 27:26 has Israel’s collective failure to uphold the law in mind, a reality to which the nation’s history

67 Gaston, *Paul*, 74, 104–6.

68 I will ultimately argue that the phrase does refer to gentiles alone—a conclusion grounded in the verse’s integral connection to the discussion of the gentiles in 3:8–9 (cf. γάρ, ὅσοι in 3:10)—but that it does so in order to highlight the problematical nature of the association: gentiles who seek righteousness based on the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) while remaining gentiles can by definition find only a curse since they fail to Judaize fully. See pp. 90–97.

69 Gaston, *Paul*, 104, 106.

70 Fuller, *Gospel*, 92–103, esp. 93–95.

71 Scott, “For as Many,” 194–95, justifies the appeal to this broader context by noting that Paul’s citation appears to conflate Deut 27:26 with 29:19b [Eng 29:20b] or 28:58. For a more extensive defense of this implication of the conflated citation, see Guy Waters, *The End of Deuteronomy in the Epistles of Paul* (WUNT 2 / 221; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 80–86.

attests.⁷² Galatians 3:10a then articulates the historical reality that all who embrace Israel's way of life (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) find themselves living under the continuing national curse of exile.⁷³ Construed in this way, the argument rests entirely on the implied premise that Israel currently stands under a curse. Scholars have rightly questioned how widespread this sentiment would have been in first-century Judaism.⁷⁴ Regardless of the premise's plausibility, however, it essentially renders Deut 27:26 irrelevant: in this reading, Deut 27:26 provides *the reason for* Israel's curse, but the argument depends only on *the present reality of* that curse. A text such as Deut 29:26–27 [Eng 29:27–28] that proleptically describes Israel's continuing national curse of exile (cf. Dan 9:11) would therefore seem more to the point. Deuteronomy 27:26, in contrast, actually fails even to point a reader to Israel's curse. While the broader Deuteronomic context does largely concern national implications, both the verse that Paul cites and its immediate OT context (Deut 27:15–26) emphasize *individual* responsibility: “Cursed is *everyone* (πᾶς; MT: “anyone,” אִשָּׁר) who does not abide.” The citation pronounces a curse on individuals, not the nation; it condemns those who fail to do the law, not those who pursue a fallen Israel's way of life. Accordingly, even if we assume the Galatians' familiarity with both the idea of Israel's continuing curse of exile and the broader context of Deut 27–32, the agitators could still easily rebut this proposed argument simply by pointing to the actual wording of the cited text.

Francis Watson similarly argues that 3:10 reflects a curse on all Israel, but he grounds his position hermeneutically rather than empirically. Watson claims that Paul reaches this conclusion primarily through a consecutive reading of the Pentateuch in which Deuteronomy portrays the certainty of the law's curse as having already overtaken and canceled its earlier promise of life in Lev 18:5.⁷⁵ Paul's understanding of the curse thus “derives . . . from the deuteronomic interpretation of Israel's history.”⁷⁶ The phrase ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου then

72 Scott, “For as Many,” 213–17; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 137–56. As noted above, Thielman, *From Plight*, 68–69, 72; Thielman, *Paul*, 126–27, 276 n. 30, argues that Paul took the additional step of inferring from Israel's curse that the law actually was unfulfillable.

73 Wright, *Climax*, 147–48.

74 E.g., Wisdom, *Blessing*, 157–58; Longenecker, *Triumph*, 137–38.

75 Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 428–30. See, e.g., the denunciation in Deut 28:45.

76 Ibid., 433. Cf. Noth, “For all,” 118–31, who similarly argues that Paul's inference in 3:10a accurately reflects the perspective of the seventh century BCE Deuteronomist for whom the curse would already have been a reality and not just a possibility. Although Noth's conclusion derives from modern reconstructions of Israel's (textual) history and can therefore

likely refers particularly to those who, in accordance with Deut 30:1–10, return to the law in the hope that God will end the curse and bring the promised blessing in its place. Paul, in contrast, concludes that the law's thoroughgoing association with the curse in Deut 28–29 renders it a lost cause; faith alone enables the transition from curse to blessing (cf. Gal 3:11–12).⁷⁷ Watson thus essentially supports the traditional explanation of 3:10—i.e., that no individual can fulfill all the law—by arguing that the national curse on Israel “foreseen” in Deuteronomy already presumes this fact.⁷⁸

The conflation of national and individual law observance in this reading constitutes a major problem. According to Watson, the national curse on Israel provides the unexpressed premise that makes 3:10 comprehensible. Israel's corporate failure to obey the law, however, does not necessarily imply the corresponding individual failure of all Israelites. Paul could, of course, have drawn this implication, but it is an implication for which he would need to argue. Even if the agitators accepted the reality of the national curse—hardly a certainty—their call for law obedience, presumably in accordance with Deut 30:1–10, would clearly show that they did not equate this national failure with the impossibility of sufficient individual success in obeying the law. Watson essentially proposes that 3:11–12 refutes this understanding of the national curse.⁷⁹ Since, from the agitators' perspective, the unexpressed premise of a national curse would still not lead to a cogent argument in 3:10, however, the agitators would have no reason to assume that 3:10–12 discusses the implications of the national curse. Indeed, all three of Paul's citations in 3:10–12 relate to the blessing and cursing of *individuals*, a curious feature given the proposed importance of the *national* curse. Paul's failure to cite a verse in 3:10b that explicitly refers to Israel's curse of exile would therefore cause Watson's proposed argument to misfire.⁸⁰

Finally, several interpreters attempt to provide a christological explanation for Paul's syllogistic logic.⁸¹ Preeminent in this regard is James Dunn, who

offer no insight into *Paul's* logic, Watson argues that a careful reading of Deuteronomy would have led Paul to discern the Deuteronomist's stance even without this historical reconstruction.

77 Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 433–34.

78 *Ibid.*, 428 n. 27.

79 *Ibid.*, 428.

80 For a more comprehensive critique of Watson's larger project, see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 421–31.

81 Cf. Ragnar Bring, *Commentary on Galatians* (trans. Eric Wahlstrom; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), 115–24, who provides a christological twist to the standard anthropological explanation. For Bring, Paul here condemns neither the law nor law observance

suggests that “works of law” signifies especially those works that differentiate the Jewish people from other people groups, namely, circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath. The phrase ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν then designates those who, in defiance of the gospel, maintain these nationalistic social boundaries by continuing to obey those distinguishing portions of the law. In other words, Dunn essentially argues that Jesus has ushered in a new salvation-historical era that requires abandoning at least part of the law in favor of faith.⁸² Not only do such proposals overlook the comprehensive nature of the obedience required by Paul’s citation (“all [πάντων] the things written in the book of the law”),⁸³ but they also result in the incoherent position that a Jew could avoid the curse on those who fail to do all the law only by acknowledging that one must not do all the law.⁸⁴

Jeffrey Wisdom offers a variation of Dunn’s sociological analysis that addresses both of these problems. Wisdom argues that, for Paul, the agitators’ attempt to impose the obsolete Mosaic law on the Galatians divides the community and impedes the Abrahamic gospel to bless the gentiles (cf. 3:8).⁸⁵ Their preaching of this “other gospel” (cf. 1:8) therefore brings them under the Deuteronomic curse on apostasy that the passages requiring adherence to all

per se but rather the futile seeking of righteousness through law observance apart from the law’s (only) perfect fulfillment in Christ.

- 82 Dunn, “Works,” 536; Dunn, *Galatians*, 172–73. He admits the agitators would have found this position unpersuasive (*Galatians*, 173). So, too, Don Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture,” *JST* 65 (1997): 85–121, 120: “in their very keeping of the law, the opponents have not kept it, because they have not ‘upheld’ it in its eschatological design, that is, to point Israel to Jesus of Nazareth as the one who has done away with the barriers of separation between nations.” Cf. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, “Sacred Violence and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13): The Death of Christ as a Sacrificial Travesty,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 98–118, 116, who similarly argues that zealous adherence to the Mosaic law results in sacrificial violence and exclusion that undercut the law’s fundamental principle of mutual love. For Hamerton-Kelly, however, Christ’s death does not initiate a change in the law so much as it enables a more mature appraisal of the Mosaic law’s inherently distorted and ungodly nature.
- 83 As Esler, *Galatians*, 183, notes, Paul’s apparent willingness to use ἔργα νόμος and νόμος interchangeably in opposition to πίστις (see 2:16–21; 3:10–12) further undermines Dunn’s proposal. Cf. Hunn, “Pistis Christou,” 81–82.
- 84 If God’s people no longer need to observe certain commands of the law, then the curse on those who do not obey *all* the law in Deut 27:26 must be a part of the law that Jesus has made obsolete. If Jesus has made Deut 27:26 obsolete, however, then it can no longer curse those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. For more comprehensive critique of Dunn’s larger framework, see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 447–55.
- 85 Wisdom, *Blessing*, 147–52.

the law (Deut 28:58, 61; 29:19, 20, 26; 30:10; cf. 9:10; 31:26) typically have in view.⁸⁶ By pronouncing this curse, then, Paul hopes to exclude the agitators and their contaminating influence from the community.⁸⁷ Wisdom thus answers the first criticism above by arguing that the *πᾶσι* functions primarily as part of a “signpost” to the broader Deuteronomic context; he addresses the second by limiting those ἐξ ἔργων νόμου to the agitators on the grounds that Paul regarded circumcision itself as adiaphorous (Gal 5:4; 6:15).⁸⁸

Wisdom’s analysis exemplifies the kind of well-constructed, historically sensitive, and theologically coherent explanation of Paul’s thought that Stanley critiques as nevertheless losing sight of the apostle’s need to persuade. In a letter where the very gospel itself hangs in the balance, for what possible reason would Paul *construct* a citation whose true meaning becomes apparent only when one recognizes that its composite nature points to an otherwise unmentioned explanation for the curse (apostasy) that not only differs from the explanation provided by the surface meaning of the constructed citation but actually contradicts it since, in this case, remaining faithful to God requires that one, in fact, *not* do all that is written in the book of the law. Such complexity requires intentionality—it cannot be explained away as Paul’s simply taking a step for granted or his overestimating the biblical literacy of his audience—and serves no purpose. I find it highly doubtful that Paul would have based the success of his argument (and his gospel!) on the gentile Galatians’ ability to intuit—in the presence of the agitators, no less—such a train of thought.

Of course, scholars resort to these complex suggestions because they see no compelling, simpler alternatives. The question thus remains: how does Paul’s argument hold together?

*Resolving the Problems: 3:8–10 as a Scriptural Argument for the
Gentiles’ Justification by Faith apart from Law*

The preceding sections have identified several problems that arise from treating 3:8–9 as an argument from Abraham. First, an appeal to Abraham seems unlikely to explain why the gentiles’ reception of the Abrahamic blessing

86 Ibid., 175–82. Cf. Garlington, “Role Reversal,” 109. Grounding the charge of apostasy in Jer 11 and Paul’s purported self-understanding as a prophet, Sigurd Grindheim, “Apostate Turned Prophet: Paul’s Prophetic Self-Understanding and Prophetic Hermeneutic with Special Reference to Galatians 3.10–12,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 545–65, 564, equates “want[ing] to be under the Sinai covenant” with a “failure to believe in Jesus” and, thus, disloyalty to God.

87 Wisdom, *Blessing*, 168.

88 Ibid., 177, 164.

implies their justification ἐκ πίστεως in 3:8. Paul's importing of the crucial reference to Abraham (ἐν σοί) into his citation of Gen 22:18 and his concluding reference to being blessed with "the *faithful* Abraham" (τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ) undermine an exemplary appeal; the replacing of the reference to Abraham's seed in Gen 22:18 and the glossing of the citation's ἐν σοί as merely "with . . . Abraham" (σὺν . . . Ἀβραάμ) undermine an incorporative appeal. Second, the inference in 3:9 that would conclude an Abrahamic argument could either broaden the recipients of the Abrahamic blessing based on the gentiles' promised reception in 3:8b or highlight justification ἐκ πίστεως as a crucial characteristic of the gentiles who receive this blessing. The former option has trouble justifying and motivating both the focus on the Abrahamic blessing in 3:9 and the movement from gentiles in 3:8 to οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9. The latter option also struggles to account for the focus on blessing and leaves the gentiles' πίστις-based justification unexplained as long as 3:9 concludes the argument. Finally, the internal logic of 3:10 implies that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου do not actually do all the law, but no coherent reason can be given for this assumption within the first-century Jewish framework of covenantal nomism as long as ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου includes everyone who seeks to obey the law.

Resolving these problems in 3:8–10 requires reenvisioning the whole argument, including its overall basis and purpose. Towards this end, the preceding analysis has identified several elements likely to appear in a more robust construal of the argument: the nature of justification as a prerequisite for the blessing in 3:8; a focus on the blessing and the gentiles' status as those not under law as keys to the relationship between 3:8a and 3:8b; the function of 3:9 as highlighting a crucial characteristic of the blessed gentiles; and the role of 3:10 in providing the otherwise missing explanation for the movement from the premise in 3:8b to the conclusion in 3:9. This section integrates these various insights into a cohesive whole.

The presumed relationship between justification and blessing in 3:8 provides a useful starting point. Since we have no potential basis apart from Abraham for identifying the blessing as justification, the problematical nature of an Abraham-based argument suggests that justification instead serves as a prerequisite for the blessing, i.e., this blessing comes only to the righteous.⁸⁹ Not only does this construal of the relationship between blessing and

89 So also Byrne, *Sons*, 148, 156; Sieffert, *Galater*, 175; Geerdhardus Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 209–59, 225 n. 17. Vos argues that Paul equates the blessing with inheritance (3:18) and life (3:10, 12), both of which have justification as their "indispensible prerequisite" (see Rom 4:13 and 1:17, respectively).

justification avoid making the argument dependant on Abraham, but it also has better independent attestation. Unlike the equating of blessing and justification, the claim that God reserves his blessing for the righteous pervades the OT and—always allowing for grace—underlies Israel's covenantal relationship with Yahweh: if they do what is right, they will be blessed (e.g., Exod 15:26; Deut 6:18; 1 Kgs 11:38; Ps 5:12; Prov 3:33, 10:6–7, 20:7; cf. Luke 14:14). Paul's argument therefore seems much more likely to presume this common understanding.

This biblical outlook, however, does not make blessing dependent on a particular kind of righteousness. In and of itself, then, the suggestion that the blessing presumes the recipients' justification cannot account for Paul's insistence in 3:8a on the *πίστις*-based nature of the gentiles' justification. The argument therefore needs to establish why this particular blessing requires justification *ἐκ πίστεως*. The conclusion in 3:9 that it is οἱ *ἐκ πίστεως* who share this blessing with Abraham—and, thus, not ὅσοι *ἐξ ἔργων νόμου* (3:10)—suggests that Paul does indeed focus on the basis for the gentiles' justification. In other words, he argues that God justifies the gentiles *ἐκ πίστεως*.⁹⁰

Before considering how Paul reaches this conclusion, I first want to note that this interpretation enables the argument to address directly what seems to constitute a crucial point of contention with the agitators, namely, the basis for the gentiles' justification. This analysis therefore resolves the problem of the perceived emphasis on blessing throughout 3:8–9: Paul appeals to Abraham's blessing to make a point about the *πίστις*-based nature of the gentiles' justification instead of assuming their justification *ἐκ πίστεως* to make a point about Abraham's blessing. Accordingly, it also accounts for the subsidiary nature of the reference to justification *ἐκ πίστεως* in 3:8a by transforming the participial clause into an anticipation of the main conclusion. That is to say, the reference in 3:8a tells the readers where Paul is heading. Finally, since this interpretation establishes rather than presumes justification *ἐκ πίστεως*, the need to read 3:8–9 as an illustration of 3:6–7—a problematical reading given the (slightly) adversative conjunction δέ in 3:8 and the lack of logical connection between 3:7 and 3:9—disappears.

So on what basis does Paul infer from his Genesis citation that God justifies the gentiles *ἐκ πίστεως*? I suggest that the argument depends on scripture,⁹¹

90 Moo, *Galatians*, 199, notes that the fronting of *ἐκ πίστεως* before the verb in 3:8 emphasizes the faith-based nature of the gentiles' justification.

91 Cf. Fuller, *Gospel*, 100–103, who finds the gentiles' faith-based justification in Paul's Genesis citation by way of the (implied) *Shema*: since God is God of both Jews and gentiles, he must justify on a basis that is equally available to everyone and not tied to cultural distinctives such as circumcision. Hence, he justifies by faith. This proposed argument,

a claim that requires elaboration. After all, many scholars identify the typical Abrahamic-based interpretations as “arguments from scripture” simply because Paul cites an OT text, an act that in and of itself involves at least a tacit appeal to scripture’s authority. Paul’s personification of scripture in 3:8, however, seems to signal a more complex role.

Rather than simply saying “it is written,” Paul has scripture proclaim the gospel to Abraham. Scholars rightly note that scripture clearly stands for God in this construction:⁹² in Gen 22:18, the angel of the Lord speaks to Abraham, while in Gen 12:3 and 18:18, the Lord himself speaks. Nevertheless, this observation does not explain *why* Paul has scripture speak for God here, why, that is, he highlights the role of “scripture” (ἡ γραφή). If he simply wanted to establish an argument from authority or to present Abraham as the prototypical hearer of the gospel, a reference either to God’s proclamation (“God preached the gospel beforehand”) or to the written text (“it is written”) could have established the point without the awkward personification.

I therefore propose that Paul invokes scripture in 3:8 to establish an argument primarily based not on Abraham’s scriptural example, nor even on the authority of scripture, but on the integrity—i.e., the unity and consistency—of scripture. In other words, by portraying scripture as the entity that made the proclamation to Abraham, Paul can then bring that proclamation into conversation with scripture’s other “sayings,” regardless of whether or not they relate directly to this promise.⁹³ If this analysis is correct, then 3:8–10 does not argue based on the surety of scripture’s promise to Abraham (although it certainly presumes this factor) but on the uniformity of scripture’s witness. That is to say, Paul argues that upholding the unity of scripture requires taking his position on the justification of gentiles. It is in this way that 3:8–10 functions as an argument from scripture.

This understanding enables the scriptural principle in 3:10 to provide the otherwise missing link between the premise in 3:8 and the inference in 3:9. The argument in 3:8–10 then proceeds as follows. (Further explanation and justification appears below.) Scripture promises Abraham that all the nations/gentiles will be blessed with him (3:8). This blessing must come to those

however, has no need for the Genesis citation, and its appeal to unity could just as easily support an argument for law observance since the gentiles’ faith-based justification is not already a given.

92 E.g., Witherington, *Grace*, 227.

93 Thus would I answer Kwon, *Eschatology*, 104–5, who suggests that Paul’s identification of Scripture as the speaker rather than God would be “quite puzzling” unless it serves to differentiate this gospel (concerning blessing) from God’s promise (concerning land) in Gal 3:16.

gentiles whose righteousness is based on faith, i.e., a faith that does not find expression in law observance (3:9). Why? Because those gentiles whose righteousness is based on works of law are necessarily under a scriptural curse (3:10a) since they cannot keep the whole law while remaining gentiles (3:10b).⁹⁴ In other words, since God promises to bless gentiles, and gentiles are by definition those who do not keep the Jewish law (cf. 2:14), then the righteousness that forms the basis for their blessing cannot be based on law.⁹⁵

Galatians 3:9–10 thus answers Burton's projected rebuttal that Gen 17 leads to the expectation that gentiles receive the blessing by entering Abraham's line through circumcision and law observance. Gentiles who entered Abraham's line in this way would no longer be gentiles: they would be proselytes to Judaism. In fact, the argument in 3:8–10 suggests that gentiles need not enter Abraham's line at all to receive this blessing.

Three additional aspects of this reading deserve comment: the marginalizing of Abraham, the focus on gentiles, and the resulting relationship of 3:8–10 to 3:6–7. First, this construal of Paul's argument hinges entirely on the connection of gentiles and blessing in the Genesis citation; the reference to Abraham does not play an essential role.⁹⁶ This interpretation thus accords with my earlier conclusion that Gen 22:18 forms the most likely source for Paul's citation: it emphasizes the presence of τὰ ἔθνη in the citation (required by the identical reference in 3:8a) without making the argument depend on an element (Abraham) imported into the citation. As for why Paul would have imported the contextually justified reference to Abraham if it plays no role, I suggest that the desires 1) to avoid introducing Christ into the argument prematurely and 2) to provide a common ground—Abraham—for both the Jews' (3:6–7) and the gentiles' (3:8–10) status as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως offer sufficient motive (cf. Rom 4:11–12). This paralleling of Jews and gentiles then indicates that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως signifies “those [justified] by faith” in 3:9 just as it does in 3:7.

What is the link between Abraham and the gentiles' justification by faith? In this analysis, Abraham functions neither as an authoritative example

94 Keeping the whole law (5:3) essentially means living as a Jew (2:14) and not as a gentile.

95 Similarly Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 137; John Bligh, *Galatians: A Discussion of St. Paul's Epistle* (Householder Commentaries 1; London: St. Paul, 1969), 252–53. Bligh even notes that 3:10 addresses the potential objection that gentiles must become law observant to share in Abraham's lineage. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 247, correctly identifies the logic but grounds it in an implied premise that “circumcised Gentiles are no longer Gentiles but Jews” rather than 3:10.

96 The content of blessing becomes equally irrelevant, at least at this stage of Paul's argument.

nor as a genealogical forebear. He instead serves as the one who secures the gentiles' blessing, a conclusion indicated by Paul's description of him as "faithful" (πιστῶ) in 3:9. While his trusting faith results in his own justification (3:6; cf. Gen 15:6), it is his faithfulness that enables the blessing to come to others (3:8–9; cf. Gen 22:18).⁹⁷ This observation then also explains why Paul interprets the ἐν σοί in his citation simply as σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ. The gentiles are not blessed "in Abraham" or "by virtue of Abraham's example" but simply "with Abraham." That is to say, they share in the same blessing that he receives.⁹⁸ Abraham thus points to the gentiles' justification by faith because he secures a blessing for them that requires their justification *as gentiles*. According to Paul, God must base this justification on faith considered apart from works of Jewish law since gentiles by definition cannot attain righteousness under the law.

Second, just as the analysis in Chapter 2 indicated that 3:6–7 concerns only Jews, so this analysis of 3:8–10 requires that these verses concern only gentiles. Scholars resist this conclusion for two main reasons: 1) the connection with οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 and 2) the assumption that the gentiles in view would be sharing in the Jews' blessing. Both of these objections derive their purported strength primarily from the misreading of 3:6–7 as redefining Abrahamic sonship based on πίστις, a misreading that then transforms 3:8–9 into a proof of the gentiles' inclusion in this redefined sonship. Without this mistaken interpretation of 3:6–7, these potential objections lose their traction.

With regard to the first objection, I have already shown that the two instances of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως cannot be logically derived from one another.⁹⁹ It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that, rather than making similar claims about the same group in 3:6–7 and 3:8–9, Paul instead uses the identical phrase to unite his conclusions about Jews (3:7) and gentiles (3:9). In each case, the text provides clear contextual indications that limit the phrase's scope: 3:7 explicitly relates the designation to "the sons of Abraham"—i.e., the Jews—while the argument in 3:8–9 expressly relates it to "the gentiles" who receive the Abrahamic blessing.¹⁰⁰ Neither argument can expand the scope of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως without introducing substantial logical and contextual difficulties.

97 Cf. Hays, *Faith*, 175–76, although Hays goes on to interpret the ἐν σοί in terms of a "representative figure" (177).

98 Cf. Johnson, "Paradigm," 195. As Part II will make clear, this blessing is adoption as a son of God, a status signified by the gentiles' reception of the Spirit.

99 See pp. 72–77.

100 Cf. Stanley, "Curse," 493: "The argument of [3:8–9] is rather that God has opened up a *different* route of 'blessing' for the Gentiles, through his promises to Abraham to 'bless the nations [=Gentiles]' through him."

If the logical development of 3:8–9 suggests that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 refers exclusively to gentiles, how much more so does the argument in 3:10. The internal logic of 3:10 implies that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου do not actually do all the law. As long as ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου includes everyone who seeks to obey the law, however, no coherent reason can be given for this assumption within the first-century Jewish framework of covenantal nomism. At the same time, the associated assumptions that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 includes both Jews and gentiles and/or that 3:10 begins a new phase of the argument make any attempt to limit the scope of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου seem arbitrary and artificial. Restricting the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:9 to gentiles effectively solves this problem since the initial γάρ in 3:10, when read in its customary explanatory sense, ties the ὅσοι to the same pool of potential members. (Significantly, Paul does not say πάντες ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.) This reading thus restricts the application of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου to gentiles as well, thereby limiting the scope of 3:10 to those who, by definition, cannot obey all the law. Viewed in this light, Paul's supporting citation in 3:10b becomes logically apt, with 3:10 then supplying the missing step connecting the premise in 3:8 to the conclusion in 3:9.

I should emphasize that this restricting of 3:9–10 to a discussion of gentiles proceeds naturally from the scope and structure of the argument established in 3:8. The potential criticism that, in other contexts, ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and related phrases never refer to gentiles therefore has little relevance. Indeed, the oxymoronic pairing makes Paul's point: *gentiles* who are justified by doing *all* that is written in the law cannot exist.

A second potential objection to this restricted scope in 3:9–10—namely, that the gentiles in view would be sharing the Jews' blessing—similarly finds little support. Nothing in 3:8 demands this assumption. The verse, after all, specifies only the gentiles/nations as recipients of the blessing. An incorporative reading of the ἐν σοί could admittedly support the assumption, but Paul specifically discourages that reading of the phrase by glossing it as σύν Ἀβραάμ in 3:9. Furthermore, although τὰ ἔθνη would have initially included Abraham's descendants along with the other nations,¹⁰¹ I will argue that Paul subsequently portrays the law as coming expressly to set the Jews apart as a distinct people so that they would not be able to receive this Abrahamic blessing to the nations without incorporation into Christ.¹⁰² The idea that gentiles share in the Jews' Abrahamic blessing thus gets the logic backwards: the Jews share in the gentiles' Abrahamic blessing.

101 Noted by Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 204; Lührmann, *Galatians*, 60.

102 See Chapter 6.

Finally, this interpretation of 3:8–10 explains the adversative-yet-connective *δέ* conjunction in 3:8.¹⁰³ Galatians 3:6–7 and 3:8–10 have many parallel elements, but they utilize those parallel elements very differently. Both cite scripture, but 3:6–7 cites it as part of an argument from Abraham's example whereas 3:8–10 cites it as part of an argument from the consistency of scripture. Both appeal to Abraham, but 3:6–7 appeals to his example of faith-based justification whereas 3:8–10 refers to his faithfulness that enables others to share in his blessing. Both draw conclusions about *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως*, but the phrase refers to Jews in 3:6–7 and to gentiles in 3:8–10. In short, the parallels unite the otherwise diverse arguments through which Paul demonstrates that the justification of both Jews and gentiles rests on faith.

This last comment then highlights one further disjunctive parallel: both passages discuss justification by faith. Because 3:6–7 refers to Jews, faith in that context would naturally be assumed to include law observance as one of its primary expressions. At the very least, nothing in 3:6–7 rules out that understanding. In Gal 3:8–10, however, Paul clearly identifies the faith that justifies gentiles as a faith that has nothing to do with law observance (cf. 3:10). Galatians 3:8–10 therefore does more than simply show that the gentiles are justified by faith. It introduces a division between faith and law as means of justification, arguing that the gentiles' justifying faith is a faith that does not find expression in law observance. The next step in Paul's argument, 3:11–12, will accordingly show that this faith/law distinction actually applies to Jews as well.

Step 3: Jewish Justification Also Ultimately Rests on Faith, Not Law Observance (3:11–12)

Gal 3:11–12

Ἰαθτι δὲ ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται παρὰ τῷ θεῷ δῆλον, ὅτι Ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.^{12a} ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.

103 As Dunn, *Galatians*, 163, notes, the use of *δέ* (rather than *γάρ*) in 3:8 identifies the verse as "conjoint with"—not as explanatory or elaborative of—3:6–7. The *δέ* thus rules against the suggestion that 3:8–9 "proves" 3:6–7 found, e.g., in Betz, *Galatians*, 142–43. At the same time, Ellicott, *Galatians*, 70, rightly observes that "The exact force of *δέ* . . . is never *simply* connective . . . and never loses *all* shades of its true oppositive character."

^{11a}And that no one is justified by law before God is apparent ^bbecause “The one who is righteous shall receive life based on faith” [Hab 2:4]. ^{12a}And the law is not “based on faith,” ^bbut “the one doing them shall receive life by [doing] them” [Lev 18:5].

The previous section argued that, according to 3:8–10, God must justify the gentiles by faith because the promised blessing of Abraham cannot come to the gentiles *as* gentiles if that blessing depends on a law-based righteousness; the law would bring them under a curse instead. It remains to show how 3:11–12 fits with this proposed interpretation. Although the details differ, analyses of 3:11–12 usually assume that these verses contrast Christian faith and Jewish law observance as means of justification, an interpretive assumption that once again creates more problems than it solves. The inherent suggestions that 3:11 applies Hab 2:4 to faith in/of Christ and that 3:12 establishes the exclusive independence of faith and law prove particularly troublesome. I contend, in contrast, that, following the discussion of gentiles in 3:8–10, these verses shift the focus back to the Jews, essentially arguing that the Jews are also justified by their faith in God and not by their law obedience.

Galatians 3:11 as a Reference to Jewish Justifying Faith

Galatians 3:11–12 essentially seeks to prove its opening premise that no one is justified before God by law.¹⁰⁴ As the emphatic fronting of ἐν νόμῳ in 3:11a and the subsequent appeal to Hab 2:4 attest, the argument focuses on the true

¹⁰⁴ Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 162–67, argues that the “relatively scarce” (165) ὅτι . . . δὴλον ὅτι construction should be read as “because no one is justified by law, it is evident *that*” instead of the more common rendering “*that* no one is justified by law is evident *because*.” So, too, de Boer, *Galatians*, 202; Kim, *Paul*, 129; Witherington, *Grace*, 234; Hays, “Galatians,” 259; Thielman, *Paul*, 127–28. As Wakefield admits, however, δὴλον can appear with a preceding ὅτι. Given this grammatical permissibility, four factors help establish the traditional reading as correct. First, a citation of Hab 2:4 follows the second ὅτι; the authoritative nature of scripture makes it more likely that Paul uses scripture to prove another claim than that he wants to establish the scripture’s veracity. Second, the law’s failure to justify anyone does not necessarily entail either that the righteous will live by faith or that those who are righteous by faith will live. Third, as Campbell, *Deliverance*, 1154–55 n. 82, notes, Wakefield’s interpretation renders 3:12 irrelevant since, in this reading, 3:11 must already presuppose the law/faith distinction that 3:12 seeks to establish. Finally, my interpretation of 3:8–10 suggests that, far from identifying an assumed point of common ground, the premise that “no one is justified by law” constitutes the principle that Paul’s argument next needs to prove.

means of justification: by faith, not by law.¹⁰⁵ Distinguishing itself from the preceding argument, the initial premise broadens the scope from ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 3:10 to οὐδεὶς in 3:11a. This progression suggests that, having shown in 3:8–10 that the law cannot justify gentiles, 3:11–12 now proceeds to show that the law does not actually justify anyone, i.e., not even the Jews.

Paul begins his proof by citing Hab 2:4: Ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. Since the premise in 3:11a is all-encompassing—*no one* (οὐδεὶς) is justified by law—the proof would need to exhibit a similarly universal scope. This stipulation makes it difficult to limit the scope of ὁ δίκαιος in the citation of Hab 2:4 either by having ἐκ πίστεως modify it¹⁰⁶ or by identifying it as a messianic title signifying “the Righteous One.”¹⁰⁷ To be all-encompassing, the former reading would require the implied premise that God justifies everyone on the same basis. Such a premise, however, would render the argument in 3:11–12 superfluous since 3:8–10 has already shown that God justifies the gentiles by faith apart from law. Likewise, appeals to ὁ δίκαιος as a messianic title would establish the necessary universal scope only if Paul expects his readers to assume either an Adamic status for the Messiah (cf. Rom 5:12–21) or an implied greater-to-lesser argument (i.e., “if the law does not justify the Messiah, how much less would it justify anyone else”).¹⁰⁸ Either way, Paul would have left the reasoning that establishes his argument unstated. The ability to make sense of 3:11 without having to posit the implied presence of such crucial steps (see below) combined with the use of the same construction—i.e., a definite article + a singular noun—to indicate generic class nouns in 3:20 (ὁ μεσίτης) and 4:1 (ὁ κληρονόμος)

105 The juxtaposition of ἐν νόμῳ (3:11a) and ἐν αὐτοῖς (3:12b) with ἐκ πίστεως (3:11b) suggests that the ἐν is instrumental (“by law”) in both cases and not—as claimed by Williams, *Galatians*, 90; Dunn, *Galatians*, 174–75; Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 175—locative (“in law”). The plural αὐτοῖς would also make for an awkward abstract entity.

106 Contra, e.g., RSV, NEB, Fung, *Galatians*, 143–45; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 484. On this point in general, see H. C. C. Cavallin, “The Righteous Shall Live by Faith: A Decisive Argument for the Traditional Interpretation,” *ST* 32 (1978): 33–43; D. Moody Smith, Jr., “Ο ΔΕ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΖΗΣΕΤΑΙ,” in *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament* (eds. Boyd L. Daniels and M. Jack Suggs; SD 29; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967), 13–25.

107 Contra, e.g., Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 119–42, esp. 140–42; Hays, *Faith*, 134–38.

108 For an argument assuming the Messiah's Adamic status, see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 863–65. For a greater-to-lesser argument, see Hays, *Faith*, 178.

accordingly suggest that ὁ δίκαιος in 3:11b constitutes an unmodified, generic class noun signifying “everyone who is righteous.”¹⁰⁹

If ἐκ πίστεως does not limit ὁ δίκαιος, then it must modify ζήσεται, a reading that the contrasting parallel with the ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς in the ensuing citation of Lev 18:5 practically requires.¹¹⁰ At the same time, however, the parallel with ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται in 3:11a suggests that scholars who link ἐκ πίστεως to ὁ δίκαιος effectively capture the citation’s significance.¹¹¹ In short, since Hab 2:4 admits that the righteous exist, Paul’s argument must prove that their righteousness does not stem from law observance. It must prove, that is, that the righteous receive their status based on faith. Understanding ζήσεται as the result of δικαιοῦται—a reading that further requires ζήσεται to signify the life that the righteous receive and not simply the manner or sphere in which they live¹¹²—enables this conclusion: no one is justified by law because scripture declares that the righteous will receive life based on [their justification by] faith.¹¹³

Habakkuk 2:4, however, does not make such a universal claim in its original context. Instead, it refers to the righteous Judeans in the prophet’s day who needed to persevere through a period of national judgment at the hands of the Chaldeans.¹¹⁴ Since Paul provides no basis for universalizing the principle, he must regard Hab 2:4 as a particular instantiation of God’s standard practice in justifying humans. This understanding of the phrase also helps explain why Paul does not explicitly identify it as a citation in Gal 3:11: it is

109 So, e.g., Johnson, “Paradigm,” 190; Dunn, *Galatians*, 175; Williams, *Galatians*, 91; Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 161.

110 Smith, “ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ,” 19.

111 E.g., Watson, “By Faith,” 159–62, who notes that Paul consistently links ἐκ πίστεως with righteousness terminology rather than life terminology.

112 Contra Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 174–77; Young, “Who’s Cursed,” 89. For the proposed reading of ζήσεται in both Habakkuk and Paul, see Debbie Hunn, “Habakkuk 2.4b in Its Context: How Far Off Was Paul?,” *JSOT* 34 (2009): 219–39, 228–30, and the literature cited there; David W. Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 23b; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988), 60.

113 So also Cavallin, “Righteous,” 40, who notes that “the connection between life and righteousness is, of course, very old in Israelite thinking [e.g., Deut 30:6, 15–20; Prov 4:13; 21:21].” Cf. Hunn, “Habakkuk 2.4b,” 238; Hays, *Faith*, 133–34. For the similar reading of 3:21, see pp. 203–4 below.

114 E.g., Alice Ogden Bellis, “Habakkuk 2:4b: Intertextuality and Hermeneutics,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* (SBLSymS 8; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 369–85, 373. Hunn, “Habakkuk 2.4b,” 230–34, does find a more universal claim in Hab 2:4, suggesting that it describes an eschatological deliverance that includes gentiles.

the general principle of justification that is important, not the particular instance in Habakkuk. Indeed, although recognizing the scriptural basis of the citation lends it greater authority, the argument makes sense even without this recognition. It makes sense, that is, as long as it meets two conditions.

First, for the argument to be convincing, the agitators would similarly have to acknowledge that Hab 2:4 articulates God's standard principle of justification. In other words, the portrayal of justification in Hab 2:4 must form the point of general agreement from which Paul then proceeds to argue. Such an assumption seems reasonable. The verse accords well with the covenantal nomism of the day, and those concerned with law observance would be inherently likely to embrace and affirm a scriptural principle. Moreover, other Jewish texts—both earlier (1QpHab viii, 1–3) and later (*b. Mak.* 24a)—specifically identify Hab 2:4 as articulating God's sole criterion for justification. Of course, Jewish interpretations typically understand the אֱמוּנָה / πίστewς in the verse to denote “faithfulness” (including law observance) rather than “faith.” It is this interpretation of the verse that Paul will challenge in 3:12.

Second, for Paul to challenge the common understanding of Hab 2:4 successfully, his analysis of the verse must agree with its context in Habakkuk; the particular instantiation must actually be an instantiation of the desired principle. Otherwise, those familiar with the original context could refute Paul's argument simply by noting that the verse does not mean what he claims. In the small details, the analysis of the citation's meaning above conforms to its sense in Habakkuk: the suggestions that ἐκ πίστεως modifies ζήσεται and that ζήσεται refers to the life the righteous will receive agree with the sense of both the LXX manuscripts and the MT.¹¹⁵ In fact, the only potential problem arises in Paul's interpretation of πίστις as “faith” rather than “faithfulness.” This one issue, however, constitutes the heart of his whole argument.

A cursory glance at the evidence does not bode well for Paul's interpretation. According to the MT, the righteous will live בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ, which translates as “by his steadfastness/faithfulness” or possibly “by its [i.e., Habakkuk's vision's] faithfulness,” but not “by his faith.” Similarly, most LXX manuscripts read ἐκ πίστεως μου, a phrase that must mean “by my [i.e., God's] faithfulness.”¹¹⁶ Whether

115 Hunn, “Habakkuk 2.4b,” 231, argues that “shall live” in Hab 2:4 refers to eschatological resurrection, but even if it merely indicates survival (e.g., Bellis, “Intertextuality,” 373), the principle of receiving life as the result of righteousness remains.

116 The switch from “his” in the MT to “my” in the LXX likely results from the common ה' / י' confusion. For analysis of the diverse textual traditions of this verse, see Rikki E. Watts, “For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel’: Romans 1:16–17 and Habakkuk 2:4,” in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*

it reflects an alternate *Vorlage* or an intentional change, only the omission of the *μου* in Paul's citation enables him to interpret *ἐκ πίστεως* as "by faith." Nevertheless, a closer inspection shows that this interpretation remains true to the original meaning of Hab 2:4.

Theodicy forms the overriding theme of Habakkuk.¹¹⁷ The book begins with the prophet's complaint asking God how long he will allow wickedness to go unchecked (Hab 1:1–4). In response, God announces a surprising turn of events "that you will not believe (לֹא תֵאֱמָר) when it is told" (1:5): he is raising up the impetuous Chaldeans to execute judgment (1:5–11). Habakkuk then laments that this solution seems to privilege the wicked even more than the original problem (1:12–17/2:1). At this point, God gives Habakkuk a vision of the outcome designed to sustain the righteous during the time of national judgment (2:2–4): the greedy Chaldeans will eventually come under judgment too (2:5–20). The final chapter then praises God for his mysterious yet faithful ways (3:1–19).

In this context, the statement that "a righteous one will live by his [LXX: my] faithfulness" (2:4b) essentially means that the righteous will live by their faith in the vision that God has shown the prophet. In this context, in other words, being faithful primarily means trusting God in a situation where he seems to have abandoned his people, trusting him in a situation that seems to call his holy and just character into question. Those who remain faithful to him, trusting in the unlikely outcome he has promised, will survive the judgment and live. The context thus defines faithfulness in terms of faith/trust.¹¹⁸ Paul's interpretation of *ἐκ πίστεως* as "based on faith"—an interpretation that enables 3:12 to distinguish the basis for righteousness in Hab 2:4 from a faithfulness that includes law observance—is thus wholly appropriate.

The interpretation is appropriate, that is, assuming that Paul's use of faith refers to a trust in God. Significantly, this requirement creates difficulties for any interpretation of Paul's argument that sees an implicit reference to Christ

(eds. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 3–25, 4–16; Dietrich-Alex Koch, "Der Text von Hab 2 4b in der Septuaginta und im Neuen Testament," *ZNW* 76 (1985): 68–85.

117 On the analysis of Hab 2:4 in its original context, see Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 127–63; Watts, "Not Ashamed," 4–16.

118 So Jan Christian Cornelis van Dorssen, *De derivata van de stam יָמַן in het Hebreeuwsch van het Oude Testament (with a Summary in English)* (Amsterdam: Drukkerij Holland N. V., 1951), 129; Hunn, "Habakkuk 2.4b," 227. Cf. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 173 n. 1, 201; Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 161.

in the phrase ἐκ πίστεως. Aside from the fact that Christ does not appear in Gal 3:6–14 until v. 13, Habakkuk says nothing about faith in/of a coming Messiah.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, given the all-encompassing scope of the claims in 3:11, a reference to faith in Christ would effectively imply that no one could have been righteous before the time of Christ, a claim that contradicts the many OT references to the righteous, including Hab 2:4 and the righteous Abraham already mentioned in Gal 3:6. Once again, then, Paul's citation seems intended to emphasize the true basis of the Jews' justification. Far from seeking to contrast Christian and Jewish means of justification, it instead establishes their mutual grounding in faith.

Galatians 3:12 as an Argument for Faith's Primacy over Law

The suggestion that 3:11 grounds all justification in πίστις becomes even clearer when we consider the conclusion of the argument in 3:12. Having cited Hab 2:4 as embodying a principle of justification on which all the parties could presumably agree, Paul must now argue that the πίστις in this verse does not include law observance. Galatians 3:12 accordingly opens with the requisite contrast between law and faith: ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως.¹²⁰ It then concludes with a citation of Lev 18:5: ἀλλ' Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς. To understand the claim, we must understand how its two halves hold together.

I begin with the ἀλλά. As the use of this conjunction shows, the citation of Lev 18:5 does not seek to prove the statement in 3:12a—in which case we would have expected a ὅτι or a γάρ—so much as it provides a contrast that authoritatively completes it.¹²¹ The fact that Paul can advance this overall claim about the law as an authoritative statement that does not require an explicit proof suggests that he expects the basic contention of the verse to find general acceptance without being overly controversial. While the point is admittedly

119 A potential messianic reading arises in the LXX primarily because the strict translation of the masculine Hebrew pronoun as αὐτόν in Hab 2:3b keeps the Greek pronoun from agreeing with the feminine ἔρασις whose Hebrew equivalent forms the antecedent in the MT. See Hays, *Faith*, 135. The suggestion of Hunn, “Habakkuk 2.4b,” 228, that faith in Christ clarifies the inchoate meaning of Habakkuk's vision by “[supplying] detail from a later revelation” proves unnecessary and shares the problem of scope discussed in the main text above.

120 On the necessity for 3:12 to complete the proof in 3:11, see Mayordomo, *Argumentiert*, 161; Vouga, *Galater*, 75. Contra Cosgrove, *Cross*, 58–60, who finds 3:12 extraneous and “confus[ing]” since his assumed definition of faith in 3:11 as “eschatological Christ-faith” (58) necessarily excludes this faith from serving as the basis for the law.

121 Gaston, *Paul*, 74.

subtle and should not be forced to carry too much interpretive weight, it does bear keeping in mind.

Of much greater significance is the nature of the contrast that the ἀλλά establishes. Understanding this contrast requires that we first explain two syntactical oddities in 3:12. First, 3:12a awkwardly contrasts ὁ νόμος with ἐκ πίστεως.¹²² As Burton observes, “It would have been formally more exact to have used ὁ νόμος and ἡ πίστις or ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and ἐκ πίστεως.”¹²³ Second, while we would expect the ἀλλά to coordinate Lev 18:5 with another complete clause, Paul could hardly intend the citation to stand in contrast to all of 3:12a.¹²⁴ The resultant meaning of such a construction—that even though the law is not ἐκ πίστεως, those who do it can nevertheless receive life—would undermine the whole argument.

A single solution accounts for both difficulties: ἐκ πίστεως serves as a shorthand reference to the Hab 2:4 passage cited in the previous verse. In other words, the incongruous syntactical parallel of ὁ νόμος and ἐκ πίστεως signals the presence of a citation in much the same way that the unbalanced ἀλλά contrast and the shift from the singular ὁ νόμος in 3:12a to the portrayal of the law as a plurality (αὐτά, αὐτοῖς) in 3:12b signal the presence of the Lev 18:5 citation.¹²⁵ The nature of ἐκ πίστεως as a citation then establishes a suitable contrast for the Lev 18:5 citation, namely, the preceding citation of Hab 2:4:

Hab 2:4	Ὁ δίκαιος	ἐκ πίστεως	ζήσεται
Lev 18:5	Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτά	ζήσεται	ἐν αὐτοῖς

122 Building on the prepositional distinctions in ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (Hab 2:4) and ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς (Lev 18:5), Nicole Chibici-Revneanu, “Leben im Gesetz: die paulinische Interpretation von Lev 18:5 (Gal 3:12; Röm 10:5),” *NovT* 50 (2008): 105–19, 114–16, argues that ἐν restricts life to a certain arena (i.e., under the law) whereas ἐκ signifies emergence into a boundaryless freedom. Hence, the law is not *from* (ἐκ) faith (Gal 3:12) because it encloses within a boundary. This interpretation lacks an explicit textual warrant for reading so much into the scripturally determined prepositions.

123 Burton, *Galatians*, 167.

124 Contra Gaston, *Paul*, 74, who awkwardly argues that 3:12a speaks of law outside the covenant while the citation in 3:12b favorably describes law under the covenant. Bring, *Galatians*, 129–30, argues for a similarly awkward division whereby 3:12 contrasts the law understood as a means to righteousness (3:12a) with the law as fulfilled by Christ (“the one who does them,” 3:12b).

125 So Moo, *Galatians*, 208; de Boer, *Galatians*, 206; Hays, *Faith*, 132–33; Schlier, *Galater*, 134. For syntactical irregularities as an indicator of citation, see Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 37; Koch, *Schrift*, 23.

The parallel structuring of each verse around ζήσεται and the phrasing of 3:12 then suggest that Paul intends to highlight the disjunction between believing (ἐκ πίστεως) and doing the law (ποιήσας αὐτά / ἐν αὐτοῖς).¹²⁶

Many scholars interpret this contrast absolutely, contending that Paul here constructs an unbridgeable chasm between faith and the law, between believing and doing.¹²⁷ The main difficulty with this reading lies in the fundamental opposition that it anachronistically creates between law obedience and faith. In the covenantal nomism that characterized first-century Judaism, Jews typically understood law obedience as the necessary expression of their faith. Indeed, the agitators could simply argue that since scripture affirms both faith (Hab 2:4) and doing the law (Lev 18:5) as means to life, it must regard the two as complementary.¹²⁸ Furthermore, Paul himself exhorts the believing Galatians to fulfill the whole law by embodying the command from Lev 19:18 to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:13–14; cf. 6:2) and to refrain from “practicing” (πράσσοντες) the immoral behavior that will keep them from inheriting the kingdom of God (5:19–21), demonstrating that even he views “believing” and “doing” as intrinsically linked (cf. 5:6: what matters is “faith *working* [ἐνεργουμένη] through love”). If Paul’s commands—some of which he quotes

126 So, e.g., Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism* (WUNT 2 / 241; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 138.

127 E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 207: “‘To live in *them*,’ . . . has nothing to do with ‘living *from* faith” (emphasis original). Cf. NIV (“the law is not based on faith”); NRSV (“the law does not rest on faith”). Joel Willits, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 105–22, 119, argues that faith and Lev 18:5 here signify different historical eras so that the verse contrasts, not believing and doing, but the new age of “*realized* covenant potential” and the old age of “*unrealized* covenant potential” (emphasis original). Had this been Paul’s meaning, he could certainly have found a clearer way of expressing it. The suggestion of Howard, *Crisis*, 63–64, that the law is not ἐκ πίστεως because, unlike the promise, it relies on human fulfillment rather than *God’s faithfulness* (i.e., πίστις) sets up a false dichotomy: God would still have to be faithful to enact the blessings he promised through his law.

128 At the very least, Paul would need to explain why, if they are oppositional, the Habakkuk citation takes precedence. Suggestions for the basis of Habakkuk’s priority include the eschatological context of Hab 2:4 (Kjell Arne Morland, “Expansion and Conflict: The Rhetoric of Hebrew Bible Citations in Galatians 3,” in *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World* [eds. Peder Borgen, et al.; ESEC 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998], 251–71, 259), the correspondence to Abraham’s example in Gen 15:6 (Schoeps, *Paul*, 177–78), Habakkuk’s later dating after the curse had taken effect (Wright, *Climax*, 148–49), and simply the witness of the gospel (Martyn, *Galatians*, 332; Williams, *Galatians*, 92). Paul, however, mentions none of these reasons.

directly from the Torah—can be grounded in faith, then there is no reason why the commands of Torah could not be as well.¹²⁹

Some scholars promote an absolute contrast by interpreting the citation as a statement of the manner or realm in which the one doing the law lives. Andrew Wakefield, for instance, argues that 3:12 simply states that “the one *having done* these things *will continue to live* this way” (emphasis original).¹³⁰ Read thus, 3:12 serves only to distinguish the age/realm of law from the age/realm of faith; the conclusion that no one can achieve righteousness within the realm of law must come from somewhere else.¹³¹ Furthermore, although this interpretation manages to preserve the validity of Lev 18:5, it does so only by offering an awkward interpretation of the citation that conflicts with the original context, where ζήσεται clearly refers to the life given to the righteous.¹³²

A better reading therefore results if, as in the interpretation of Hab 2:4 above, we understand ζήσεται in the citation of Lev 18:5 as a blessing bestowed on the righteous. Connecting ἐκ πίστεως in 3:12a with the preceding citation of Hab 2:4 then removes the absolute nature of the contrast between faith and law, limiting the contrast instead to the basis on which each grants

129 Cf., too, Paul's positive statements about the connections between Torah and faith in Romans (e.g., Rom 3:31). The suggestion that 3:12 denies that the law has its ground in specifically Christian faith does not solve the problem: the statement contrasts believing and doing, not the objects / types of faith.

130 Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 175. Cf. de Boer, *Galatians*, 208; Chibici-Revneanu, “Leben im Gesetz,” 112–16; Dunn, *Galatians*, 175; Lührmann, *Galatians*, 61.

131 E.g., highlighting the lexical connections between Deut 27:26 and Lev 18:5 (ποιῆσαι αὐτά / ποιήσας αὐτά, ἐν / ἐν), de Boer, *Galatians*, 206–8, and Chibici-Revneanu, “Leben im Gesetz,” 113, invoke the purported curse on all law observers in Gal 3:10 to establish that the law cannot lead to righteousness.

132 Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 171, argues that because the life in Lev 18:5 is not eschatological, it must concern daily living, a reading that essentially makes the LXX's phrase (if not Paul's application of it) tautological. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 152–53. As Wakefield himself notes, however, “the life that is promised is long life in the land” (171), a promise that according to Lev 18:26–29, Israel will lose if they commit the forbidden abominations (171 n. 125). Life in Lev 18:5, then, is something that Israel receives, not something they do. So, too, Sprinkle, *Law*, 140–42; Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 320–23. For the common tendency in ancient Judaism to read the promise in Lev 18:5 eschatologically, see Simon J. Gathercole, “Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 126–45.

[the justification that brings] life (ζήσεται).¹³³ This reading thus enables 3:12 to speak directly to Paul's original premise: the law justifies no one before God because the law *justifies* based on obedience ("doing the law") rather than faith.

Of course, this formulation raises the question of why no one can be justified by doing the law as Lev 18:5 promises.¹³⁴ Whatever the reason, it is again worth noting that Paul considers it obvious enough that he need not explain it. We essentially have four possible explanations: Lev 18:5 could be irrelevant, wrong, canceled/superseded, or unachievable.¹³⁵

Paul could regard Lev 18:5 as irrelevant to justification since it never identifies those who do the law as righteous, nor does it claim that the law justifies.¹³⁶ The explicit identification of Lev 18:5 as describing "the righteousness that comes from law" in Rom 10:5, however, precludes the suggestion that Paul here presents "being righteous" and "doing the law" as two separate ways to life.¹³⁷ The common association of righteousness with law observance in Judaism would also undermine such an argument.

The suggestion that Paul regards Lev 18:5 as a false promise proves even more problematical. According to this view, the problem is nomological in nature: the gospel leads Paul to conclude that the law could never give life even to those who faithfully obey it (cf. Gal 3:21), an assessment often grounded in

133 Cf. Silva, *Interpreting*, 193. The suggestion that Paul regards "justification" and "life" synonymously (e.g., Sprinkle, *Law*, 139) is awkward and unnecessary. Rather, receiving life implies a prior justification.

134 Contra Fuller, *Gospel*, 98, 103, whose suggestion that ὁ νόμος in 3:12 signifies a legalistic, "Jewish *misinterpretation* of the law" has no contextual support.

135 Organizing his analysis somewhat differently, Sprinkle, *Law*, 143–52, identifies five types of explanation for the law's inability to lead to life: dogmatic, nomological, salvation historical, anthropological, and a contrast of divine and human agency.

136 So Jean Noël Aletti, "L'argumentation de Ga 3,10–14, une fois encore. Difficultés et propositions," *Bib* 92 (2011): 182–203, 193–94, who argues that Gal 3:11–12 employs a *gezerah shawah* argument around ζήσεται whereby the lack of πίστις and δίκαιος/δικαιοσύνη language in Lev 18:5 establishes the heterogeneity of law and faith: "la Loi elle-même n'est pas au service de la justice." As Aletti admits, such an argument would be unlikely to convince.

137 Hong, "Does Paul Misrepresent the Jewish Law?," 178–79, argues that the law never had anything to do with justification—which Hong understands as "[entering] into a right relationship with God"—serving instead only to maintain the covenantal blessings already secured by faith. This focus on entering seems both misplaced—Gal 3:3, for instance, suggests that the question is how to mature—and unwarranted since, even in this model, God requires law observance to maintain one's justification / right relationship (176).

the law's requirement of "doing" (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτά) rather than "believing."¹³⁸ If Lev 18:5 is untrue, however, then the law might indeed be ἐκ πίστεως. Paul would have produced no reliable evidence to the contrary. Such a conclusion would accordingly negate the validity of the contrast with Hab 2:4 and, thus, Paul's argument. Moreover, the resulting challenge to the general trustworthiness of scripture would undercut the force and authority of all Paul's scriptural appeals.

A third option argues that the principle of faith in Hab 2:4 replaces the principle of law in Lev 18:5 that Israel annuls through their breaking of the covenant.¹³⁹ In other words, this position must hold that the law no longer represents a viable option. Attempts to tie this shift to Christ's ushering in of a new age (cf. 3:25) run into the problem that God already institutes this "new" paradigm in the days of Habakkuk, several centuries before Christ. Furthermore, if in the time from Moses to Habakkuk (or to Christ) the law provided the only hope of justification, then no one in that time period could have been considered righteous since—Paul's main point—the law justifies no one.

One option remains: that righteousness before God has always been and will always be unachievable based on law because no one can actually do the commandments sufficiently so as to receive justification and life.¹⁴⁰ As with the similar explanation of 3:10, critics of this view can point to Paul's personal

138 E.g., Smiles, "Blessing," 12–13; Hays, *Faith*, 178; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 148–50; Beker, *Paul*, 54; Schlier, *Galater*, 134. Martyn, *Galatians*, 328–34, reaches this conclusion by arguing that 3:11–12 represents a "Textual Contradiction" that neither follows the standard form of such contradictions nor holds to the form's fundamental assumption that scripture cannot contradict itself. Cf. Schoeps, *Paul*, 177–78, who suggests that the earlier citation of Gen 15:6 resolves the contradiction in favor of faith.

139 E.g., Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 335, 428–29, 516; Morland, *Rhetoric*, 225; Wright, *Climax*, 148–51; Cosgrove, *Cross*, 55–57; Bruce, *Galatians*, 163. Sprinkle, *Law*, 159–63, follows Watson in arguing that a contrast of divine and human agency underlies this shift. Willitts, "Context," 121, grounds this suggestion in the observation that Ezek 20 and Neh 9:29 both cite Lev 18:5 in the context of Israel's failure to obey the law and achieve the promised life (cf. CD III, 16). Grindheim, "Apostate," 564, similarly appeals to Ezekiel.

140 E.g., Longenecker, *Galatians*, 118–21; Hübner, *Law*, 38–41. Cf. J. S. Vos, "Die Hermeneutische Antinomie bei Paulus (Galater 3.11–12; Römer 10.5–10)," *NTS* 38 (1992): 254–70, 265–67, who argues that Paul resolves the scriptural contradiction in 3:11–12 according to the Hellenistic rhetorical model of *legum contrarium*, i.e., by asking questions in 3:15–22 that ultimately prove the chronological priority of promise and the Lawgiver's original intent for the law to lead to life only indirectly through its exposing of sin. This "solution," however, still renders Lev 18:5 a rather misleading promise, and Paul gives few indications that he regards the subsequent discussion in Gal 3:15–22 as primarily resolving a tension established in 3:11–12.

claim of blamelessness under the law (Phil 3:6) and emphasize that the law does not require perfect obedience since it makes allowances for repentance, forgiveness, and atonement. Indeed, not even the ultra-law-observant community at Qumran claimed perfect obedience:

As for me, if I stumble, the mercies of God shall be my salvation always; and if I fall in the sin of the flesh, in the justice of God, which endures eternally, shall my judgment be; . . . he will judge me in the justice of his truth, and in his plentiful goodness always atone for all my sins; in his justice he will cleanse me from the uncleanness of the human being and from the sins of the sons of man, so that I can give God thanks for his justice and The Highest for his majesty. (1QS XI, 11–12, 14–15)¹⁴¹

For Paul to assert that the law cannot justify anyone because no one does it perfectly would therefore be to argue against a construct of the law to which no Jew (himself included) would ascribe. His argument would be unpersuasive and irrelevant.

If, as most interpreters assume, Gal 3:12 seeks to contrast Christian faith with Jewish law observance as means of justification,¹⁴² then this critique of the suggestion that no one can sufficiently fulfill the law is both valid and damning. If, however, 3:12 instead seeks to establish that the Jews' own justification ultimately rests on faith and not law observance, then this potential objection actually proves the point: the law's built-in provisions for grace and forgiveness demonstrate that God does not justify the Jews based on their law observance—which no one can do perfectly—but on faith and grace. In fact, Lev 18:5 presumably has this sense in its original context. No Jew would have understood the verse as mandating perfect obedience.

The contrast between believing and doing in 3:11–12 admittedly goes against this original sense of Lev 18:5 by absolutizing the prescribed “doing” of the law, but I suggest that Paul applies the verse in this polemical way to emphasize its original sense. He absolutizes it, that is, in order to draw attention to its implied elements. Not only does this rhetorical move make the point clear to anyone who might not be familiar with the original contextual sense, but it also forces any agitators who would challenge his reading to argue either that Lev 18:5 envisions a role for faith and grace—thereby proving Paul's point—

¹⁴¹ Translation from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997–1998), 1:97–99.

¹⁴² Cf. Sprinkle, *Law*, 160, on 3:11–12: “‘faith’ for Paul is always ‘faith in Christ,’ . . . this is not a major point of contention among interpreters.”

or, if they accept the contrast, that they were earning their righteous status before God. The coherence that this interpretation achieves with the context of covenantal nomism then explains why Paul feels no need to explain or prove the point: not even the agitators would dare to claim that their righteousness was earned.

Understood in this way, Paul's logic regards Lev 18:5 as unachievable only in the sense that no one can achieve life by doing the law perfectly. It therefore allows for the fulfillment of Lev 18:5—thereby upholding the integrity of scripture and protecting God against claims of offering false hope and promises—as long as that promise is situated in its original context of covenantal faith and grace.¹⁴³ This fulfillment remains possible because, although the passage distinguishes faith from law observance to establish the former as the true basis of justification, it does not thereby sever or impugn the typical Jewish connection between faith and law observance: the claim in 3:12a that “the law is not ‘based on faith’” signifies not that law stands in absolute opposition to faith but that, as the contrast between the citations in 3:11b and 3:12b shows, the law does not justify based on faith. In other words, the law may not justify because no one fully obeys it, but law observance—at least at this point in Paul's argument—continues as an important expression of the faith that does. This distinction between faith and law, which was suggested by the establishment of a similar distinction for gentiles in 3:8–10, would thus remain a largely academic matter were it not for Christ. As Paul goes on to argue in 3:13, however, Christ's action on the cross turns this academic primacy of faith into a ground for dispensing with the law.

Step 4: Christ Severs Jewish Faith from Law Observance, Enabling Jews to Rejoin the Nations and Receive the Spirit (3:13–14)

Gal 3:13–14

¹³Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα, ὅτι γέγραπται, Ἐπικατάρτος πᾶς ὁ κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, ^{14a}ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραάμ γένηται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ^{14b}ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

143 The law could expose sin (cf. Gal 3:19; Rom 3:20) since God had already established a means (faith) of compensating for the inevitable lack in achievement. For more on the role of the law, see especially Chapter 6.

¹³*Christ purchased us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for our sakes—because it is written “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” [Deut 21:23]—^{14a}so that to the gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Christ Jesus, ^bso that the promise of the Spirit we might receive through this faith.*

The preceding analysis of Gal 3:6–12 has characterized the ubiquitous attempts to import Christ into the passage’s statements about faith as both unwarranted and untenable within the logic of Paul’s argument. Nevertheless, Christ does play an important role in Paul’s understanding of Abrahamic descent. With the opening asyndeton in 3:13 distinguishing these concluding verses from the rest of 3:6–14, Christ finally makes his appearance. These verses essentially show how he relates to each of Paul’s earlier arguments in 3:6–12, providing a christological twist to each of the preceding claims. In fact, the three components of this concluding section—vv. 13, 14a, and 14b—seem to correspond to the three sections of the larger argument—vv. 6–7, 8–10, and 11–12—so as to form a chiasm.¹⁴⁴

The suggestion that Gal 3:13–14 forms part of a chiasm is not new. Hans-Joachim Eckstein, for instance, suggests the following chiasmic structure based on the traditional tripartite breakdown of 3:1–14:¹⁴⁵

144 For general methodological issues concerning the identification and analysis of intermediate-length chiasms in the letters of Paul, see Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 111; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995).

145 Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 150–51. Cf. Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 22; Tolmie, *Persuading*, 123. Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 136, suggests that the passage reflects a chiasmic structure based on the keywords of the cited scriptures:

- A. Faith (Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6)
- B. Blessing (Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8)
- C. Curse (Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10b)
- D. Life (Hab 2:4 in Gal 3:11)
- D'. Life (Lev 18:5 in Gal 3:12)
- C'. Curse (Deut 21:23 in Gal 3:13)
- [B'. Blessing (allusion to Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:14a)]

[A'. Faith (Gal 3:14b)]

Wakefield’s proposal rightly limits the chiasm to 3:6–14, but it suffers from two major difficulties. First, the A’ and B’ lines do not actually contain cited scripture, thereby breaking the proposed basis of the structure. Second, as the lack of references to Paul’s larger argument suggests, this structure at times seems to go against the flow of Paul’s thought, as, e.g., when it parallels Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5 without noting that Paul introduces the latter only to make the subsidiary point that the law is not ἐκ πίστεως. Cf. the similar chiasms (but different reasoning) in Cosgrove, *Cross*, 48–49; Campbell, *Deliverance*, 856–57.

- A. 3:1–5 Galatians receive Spirit by faith
- B. 3:6–9 Faith as key to the gentiles' participation in the Abrahamic blessing
- C. 3:10–12 Those under the law are under a curse
- C'. 3:13 Christ frees us from the curse of the law
- B'. 3:14a So that the Abrahamic blessing might come in Christ to gentiles
- A'. 3:14b So that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

The lexical and thematic connections that form the basis for this chiasm are clear and, in many ways, compelling: receiving the Spirit by faith in the A–A' frame, the gentiles' reception of the Abrahamic blessing in the B–B' frame, and the curse of the law in the C–C' frame. Nevertheless, the tripartite division of 3:1–12 that forms the backbone of this model is problematical, as this chapter has sought to show. For instance, Eckstein's chiasm omits any reference to Paul's discussion of Abrahamic sonship in 3:6–7, merging that topic into the distinct discussion of the Abrahamic blessing that comes to the gentiles in 3:8–10.

Eckstein's pairing of 3:14b with the Galatians' reception of the Spirit in 3:1–5 also requires that the first-person plural reference in 3:14b (“we might receive,” *λάβωμεν*) include gentile Christians. This observation highlights a larger exegetical difficulty within 3:13–14 as a whole, namely, the interpretation of Paul's first-person references. In addition to the instance in 3:14b, first-person plural references appear in 3:13, where they refer to those whom Christ frees from the curse of the law. The difficulty arises because the instances in 3:13 seem most naturally to refer to Jews (i.e., those under the law), whereas many interpreters understand the instance in 3:14b as referring to all Christians.

Scholars often resolve this perceived difficulty by arguing either 1) that Paul includes the gentiles with those under law in 3:13 or 2) that the antecedent for Paul's “we” changes from Jews in 3:13 to all Christians in 3:14.¹⁴⁶ Neither option

¹⁴⁶ For the inclusion of gentiles under law in 3:13, see Moo, *Galatians*, 211–13; de Boer, *Galatians*, 209; N. H. Young, “Pronominal Shifts in Paul's Argument to the Galatians,” in *Ancient History in a Modern University, Vol. 2: Early Christianity, Late Antiquity and Beyond* (eds. T. W. Hillard, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 205–15; Martyn, *Galatians*, 334–36. For a midsentence change in first-person antecedent, see T. L. Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3.13–14,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 94–112, 95–100; D. W. B. Robinson, “The Distinction between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians,” *ABR* 13 (1965): 29–48. The suggestion that the first-person references refer exclusively to *gentiles* throughout 3:13–14—see Gaston, *Paul*, 29; Dalton, “Meaning,” 38—cannot be maintained: Paul simply was not a native gentile (cf. 2:15).

seems plausible. With regard to the former, the gentiles were never under Torah; that is what makes them gentiles. Furthermore, when Paul does want to unite Jews and gentiles as enslaved groups, he does so by bringing the Jews under the στοιχεία, not the gentiles under the law (4:3, 8–10).¹⁴⁷ With regard to the latter option, an awkward, implicit midsentence change in the first-person antecedent seems unnecessary since the latter statement does not become incoherent if it refers only to Jewish reception of the Spirit, nor does it thereby exclude gentile reception. Moreover, Paul otherwise consistently identifies “the gentiles” in 3:6–14 as a distinct group, never self-identifying with them in this passage (including in 3:14a).

Given these difficulties, I suggest that all of the first-person plural references in 3:13–14 continue the programmatic distinction made in 2:15—“we are Jews by nature and not gentile sinners”—and refer exclusively to Jews.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, the Jew-gentile-Jew structure of the clauses in 3:13–14 then matches the Jew-gentile-Jew focus that I have outlined for the major sections in 3:6–12, strengthening the claim for my proposed chiasm:

- A. 3:6–7 **Jews** require justification by faith to be true sons of Abraham
- B. 3:8–10 **Gentiles** require justification by faith apart from law to receive Abraham’s blessing
- C. 3:11–12 **Jews** are also justified by faith, not by law observance
- C’. 3:13 Christ purchases the **Jews** from (the curse of) the law
- B’. 3:14a So that to the **gentiles** Abraham’s blessing might come in Christ
- A’. 3:14b So that the **Jews** might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

In this analysis, the C’ section highlights the significance of the division between faith and law observance in the C verses. The two consecutive ἵνα clauses in 3:14 (B’ and A’, respectively) then show how the resulting freedom from the curse

¹⁴⁷ So Donaldson, *Paul*, 182, arguing against Bo Reicke, “The Law and This World according to Paul: Some Thoughts concerning Gal 4 1–11,” *JBL* 70 (1951): 259–76. Howard, *Crisis*, 59–62, points to the first πᾶς in 3:10b (“Cursed is everyone [πᾶς] who does not abide”) for evidence that Paul includes the gentiles as those cursed by—and thus “suppressed under” (61)—the law. Against this view, both the citation’s original context and common sense suggest that the law condemns only those who fall under its domain.

¹⁴⁸ So John W. Taylor, “The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians,” *TynBul* 63 (2012): 291–316, 304–5; Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (WUNT 2 / 282; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 114; Le Cornu and Shulam, *Galatians*, 206; Wright, *Climax*, 154.

of the law enables Abraham's blessing to flow in Christ to the gentiles (cf. B, 3:8–10) and the Jews to receive the Spirit that makes them Abraham's true sons through faith (cf. A, 3:6–7). I will discuss each of these twists below.

The C–C' Twist (3:11–12, 3:13): Freeing the Jews from (the Curse of) the Law

Paul begins his explanation of Christ's role with an economic metaphor: Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου. Although English translations typically render this phrase as “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law,”¹⁴⁹ Paul does not actually use the word for “redeem” ([ἀπο-]λυτρόω), which would have highlighted the payment of a debt/ransom (cf. Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7). The verb that Paul does use, ἐξαγοράζω, simply means “purchase.”¹⁵⁰ It highlights the price that is paid and/or the resulting state of obligation, hence Paul's two uses of the root outside of Gal 3:13 and 4:5 remind his readers that they have been “bought with a price” (τιμῆς ἡγοράσθητε, 1 Cor 7:23; cf. 1 Cor 6:20) and should therefore act accordingly.¹⁵¹ This distinction between purchase and redeem becomes significant given the conclusion below that Gal 3:13 does not describe atonement.

Christ makes this purchase “by becoming a curse for us” (γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα).¹⁵² Of course, modern readers would like to know exactly *how* Christ's becoming a curse effects freedom from the law's curse. Rather than clarifying this connection, however, Paul instead cites Deut 21:23 to establish what he

149 So, e.g., the NASB, NRSV, and NIV.

150 Although Greek lexicons (e.g., LSJ, BDAG) typically list “redeem” as a secondary meaning of ἐξαγοράζω, Galatians provides the primary evidence. See S. Lyonnet, “L'emploi paulinien de ἐξαγοράζω au sens de 'redimere' est-il attesté dans la littérature grecque?,” *Bib* 42 (1961): 85–89, and McLean, *Cursed*, 127–31, who concludes that the verb “simply means ‘to buy’ without specifying the intent of the author, whether it be ‘buying to own,’ or ‘buying to set free’” (130).

151 Appeals to Revolutionary War heroes whose blood “purchased” or “paid for” America's freedom from the tyranny of England provide a modern (if somewhat derivative) parallel.

152 David Brondos, “The Cross and the Curse: Galatians 3.13 and Paul's Doctrine of Redemption,” *JSTT* 81 (2001): 3–32, 22, suggests that the participial phrase γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα could simply signify time (“after having become a curse for us”). In this case, the “purchase” would presumably refer to Christ's post-resurrection offering of his blood / himself in the heavenly temple (e.g., Heb 9:23–24). Such a reading, however, relegates Christ's becoming accursed to the background, a shift of focus that runs counter to the ensuing explanation of that curse. Scholars therefore rightly prefer to interpret γενόμενος as a participle of means, an interpretation that the phrase's position after the main verb further supports. For the tendency of aorist participles to mirror the aorist tense of a main verb of identical action, see BDF §339.

must have regarded as the more significant and/or controversial claim, namely, that Jesus did, in fact, become a curse. He apparently assumes the relevance of Christ's cursing to "our" freedom to be self-evident, suggesting that he employs a rather straightforward logic.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, before we investigate that logic, we first need to understand the significance of the curse itself, i.e., the portion of the argument that Paul's citation highlights.¹⁵⁴

The citation of Deut 21:23 in Gal 3:13 differs from typical LXX texts in two main ways. First, it omits ὑπὸ θεοῦ, thereby eliminating the explicit reference to Jesus' being cursed "by God." For many scholars, this omission points to the supposedly Pauline principle that God could not have cursed Jesus. Absolutizing this conclusion must then result either in dividing the law from the curse so as to reduce the curse to mere appearance / human opinion (cf. Isa 53:4)¹⁵⁵ or else in dividing the law from God so that Paul here differentiates between "the cursing law" and "the blessing God" (cf. Gal 3:19).¹⁵⁶ The former option fails because the law itself pronounces the curse. As for the latter, Paul never seems to endorse such an unnatural divide between God and his holy law (cf. Rom 7:12), and anyone familiar with the source of the citation (or simply with the divine nature of the Jewish law) would naturally assume that God stood behind the law's curse. Thus, even if Paul deliberately omitted ὑπὸ θεοῦ to downplay God's role in the cursing, it cannot support a more rigid distinction between God and his law (cf. 2 Cor 5:21).¹⁵⁷

In a more significant development, Paul's citation also substitutes ἐπικατάρατος for the LXX's κεκατηραμένος. Given the resulting parallel with

153 The suggestion of Vanhoye, "Pensée," 112, that Paul simply wants to evoke "stupéfaction admirative" for such a bold claim seems unlikely given the apostle's desire to persuade. Vanhoye's own explanation—that by enduring, in perfect submission to God's love and in generous solidarity with us, a curse signifying opposition to God's will and estrangement from others, Christ thereby transforms the curse into a blessing (113–14, 121)—still leaves the logic of this transformation unexplained.

154 The argument of Brondos, "Cross," 30, that the significance of Jesus' death lies only in that it occurs while he is seeking the redemption of others (which God then chooses to honor by resurrecting him and giving him the authority to effect redemption) fails to explain why Paul takes such pains to establish that Jesus becomes a curse.

155 Bligh, *Galatians*, 270.

156 Martyn, *Galatians*, 320–21, 326. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 172; Hamerton-Kelly, "Sacred," 116; Koch, *Schrift*, 125.

157 "Donwplaying" interpretations range from the suggestion of Oepke, *Galater*, 108, that Paul distinguishes between God's personal involvement and his holy law's mechanistic, automatic judgment to the suggestion of Meyer, "Galatians," 116, that Paul simply omits an obvious element.

the ἐπικατάρατος in Gal 3:10, the change most likely reflects a Pauline modification intended to connect the two Deuteronomic curses that he has cited.¹⁵⁸ by hanging on a tree (Deut 21:23), Jesus falls under the same curse as those who fail to observe all the law (Deut 27:26).¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Paul offers no counter to the Deuteronomic condemnation. Far from extolling Jesus' sinlessness (cf. 2 Cor 5:21) or alluding to the sacrificial nature of his sufferings (cf. Rom 3:25), Paul here establishes only Christ's condemnation under the law. He suggests neither that the law wrongly condemns an "innocent" Christ,¹⁶⁰ nor that only legalistic minds could imagine Christ's actually being accursed based on this verse.¹⁶¹ Jesus suffers the same curse as all other lawbreakers.

This resulting equivalence in curses has important implications for understanding Paul's logic. It leads most scholars to conclude that the verse describes a substitutionary atonement in which Christ somehow takes "our" place—however the pronoun is understood—under a curse that "we" should rightfully suffer.¹⁶² Stephen Finlan helpfully notes that many such explanations conflate a sacrificial understanding of Jesus' death (in which Jesus atones through penal substitution) with an understanding of Jesus as a scapegoat

158 So Koch, *Schrift*, 166.

159 Contra Brondos, "Cross," 22, who suggests that the lack of an article before κατάρα differentiates the two curses.

160 Contra, e.g., Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. William Montgomery; London: A & C Black, 1931; repr., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), 72, 211–12; Beker, *Paul*, 185–86, 261. In this view, Christ frees us from the law's curse by bringing about the condemnation of the law. I fail to see how the law could condemn an "innocent" man since the law itself determines guilt or innocence, being the embodiment of God's "holy, righteous, and good" judgments (cf. Rom 7:12). It is also difficult to reconcile this view with Paul's later statement that through faith we "establish" (ἱστανόμεν) the law (Rom 3:31). For a different take on the innocence theme, see Aletti, "L'argumentation," 196, who suggests that Paul creates a *gezerah shavah* between Deut 21:23 and 27:26 to establish that the law can curse even the innocent.

161 Contra Burton, *Galatians*, 168. In this view, Christ frees us from "a false conception of God's attitude" by exposing the lie that God judges people based on a legalistic adherence to the law. Besides having no basis in the passage, this interpretation undermines the truthfulness of the law and scripture. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sacred," who somewhat similarly argues that Christ frees us from violent religious zealotry by allowing himself to become "a victim of the sacrificial delusion" (117), thereby exposing the "unnecessary and undesirable" nature of a Mosaic law that distorts God's fundamental principle of mutual love (116).

162 E.g., Longenecker, *Galatians*, 121; Fung, *Galatians*, 150; Bruce, *Galatians*, 166; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 139.

(in which case Jesus atones by carrying away the curse). He then argues that Gal 3:13 must have the Levitical scapegoat in mind since only in the case of the scapegoat does a transference of sins/curses actually take place (and because penal substitution is a concept foreign to the Hebrew sacrificial system).¹⁶³ In making this distinction, Finlan rightly pinpoints the crucial element for any form of substitutionary atonement: transference. It is precisely this element that Paul's argument lacks.

To be sure, Gal 3:13 does speak of Christ's becoming a curse "for us" (ὕπερ ἡμῶν), but this phrase need mean only "for our benefit"; unlike ἀντὶ ἡμῶν, it does not require that Paul means "in our place."¹⁶⁴ The real problem for this interpretation, though, comes in the supporting citation of Deut 21:23, which explicitly curses anyone hanged on a tree.¹⁶⁵ As noted above, this citation

163 Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (SBLABib 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 102–3. Cf. McLean, *Cursed*, 51–52; Daniel R. Schwartz, "Two Pauline Allusions to the Redemptive Mechanism of the Crucifixion," *JBL* 102 (1983): 259–68.

164 Cf. David A. Brondos, *Paul on the Cross: Reconstructing the Apostle's Story of Redemption* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 108; Burton, *Galatians*, 172; Meyer, "Galatians," 116–17.

165 In its OT context (both MT and LXX), Deut 21:23 refers to the postmortem hanging of capital criminals. As Terence L. Donaldson, "Zealot and Convert: The Origin of Paul's Christ Torah Antithesis," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 655–82, 677, notes, Jesus was convicted of a capital crime, so his situation differs only in that the "hanging" represents his method of execution. Nevertheless, other Jewish interpretive traditions also connect this curse with crucifixion (Peshitta; 11QT^a LXIV 6–13; cf. 4QpNah 3–4 I, 7–8) and it is this connection rather than the implication of a capital offense that seems to provide the basis for Paul's argument. In investigating the reasons for early Jewish persecution of Christians, Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 235–60, 249–50; repr. from *JTS* 42 (1991): 532–64, denies that first-century Jews would generally have understood Deut 21:23 as pronouncing a curse on those crucified simply for their being hanged on a tree (i.e., apart from their committing a capital offense), a case made even more thoroughly by Kelli S. O'Brien, "The Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.13): Crucifixion, Persecution, and Deuteronomy 21.22–23," *JSNT* 29 (2006): 55–76. Paul's clear identification of crucifixion with cursing in Gal 3:13—which Fredriksen dismisses as a mere rhetorical flourish in the "snarled" passage's movement from "curse" to "blessing"—may therefore represent a largely Christian interpretation. The LXX, which perhaps reflects a different *Vorlage* than the MT, facilitates this move: whereas the MT refers only to "one who is hanged" [תלי], the LXX refers to "everyone [πᾶς; cf. *Targum Neofiti*] who is hanged on a tree [ἐπὶ ξύλου; cf. Peshitta; 11QT^a LXIV 6–13; 4QpNah 3–4 I, 7–8]." The πᾶς emphasizes the general nature of the statement suggested by the anarthrous תלי, while the ἐπὶ ξύλου—which repeats a phrase found earlier in the verse in both the MT and LXX—makes the verse particularly

establishes Christ's condemnation under the law. By implication, then, Christ does not bear "our" curse, he bears his own curse, just like every other law-breaker. Paul's claim in 3:11 that the law justifies "no one"—significantly, not "no one but Christ"—helps confirm this analysis. If, however, Christ stands accused according to the law, then he has not taken on the curse of others (scapegoat explanation), nor is he in a position to serve as a righteous substitute for those similarly cursed by the law (penal substitution). Galatians 3:13 simply cannot describe a substitutionary atonement.¹⁶⁶

An alternative interpretation argues that the verse instead portrays a representative atonement. N. T. Wright, for instance, argues that, as Israel's Messiah King, Christ here "exhausts" the curse that rests on national Israel, thereby enabling the restoration phase of Deuteronomy's covenantal sin-judgment-restoration paradigm to begin. As he explains,

That which, in the scheme of Deuteronomy, Israel needed if she incurred the curse of the law, is provided in Christ: the pattern of exile and restoration is acted out in his death and resurrection. He *is* Israel, going down to death under the curse of the law, and going through that curse to the new covenant life beyond.¹⁶⁷

This interpretation, however, cannot explain why the curse must be "exhausted" in the first place. After all, the remedy for initiating restoration in Deuteronomy

applicable to crucifixion. On this complex textual history, see Wilcox, "Upon the Tree," 86–90. For the suggestion that Paul invokes Deut 21:23 because of Christ's vicarious curse bearing (cf. Num 25:4; 2 Sam 21:6) rather than his crucifixion, see Ardel B. Caneday, "Redeemed from the Curse of the Law": The Use of Deut 21:22–23 in Gal 3:13," *TJ* 10 (1989): 185–209, 201.

In the other major difference between the versions, the LXX reads "cursed by God" (κατατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ; cf. Paul's ἐπικατάρατος) against the MT's "curse of God" (קללת אלהים). The LXX thus reflects a subjective genitive reading of the Hebrew phrase (cf. *Targum Neofiti*; 11QT^a LXIV 6–13) in which the hanging brings about the curse, an interpretation that makes good sense of the MT. See Moshe J. Bernstein, "בי קללת אלהים תלוית" (Deut 21:23): A Study in Early Jewish Exegesis," *JQR* 74 (1983): 21–45.

166 The lack of transference also undermines the attempt of Basil S. Davis, *Christ as Devotio: The Argument of Galatians 3:1–14* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002), to ground a substitutionary atonement in the Roman concept of *devotio*.

167 Wright, *Climax*, 151–52. Dunn, *Galatians*, 177, who understands the first-person plural as inclusive of all humanity, grounds the representational aspect of his atonement theory in Paul's Adam Christology, which does not appear explicitly anywhere in Galatians, let alone in this passage.

is always a return to God (30:1–3), not an extreme instance or pattern of the curse. It is also worth asking what “exhausting Israel’s curse” really means in this context since the supposed liberation is both 1) limited to those Jews who recognize Christ as Messiah and 2) largely still to come. If Christ has exhausted the curse, why does it still linger (cf. Gal 3:10)?

These atonement explanations all assume that, until Christ, “we” suffered under the curse of the law. Given that gentiles could not incur the curse of a law to which they were never subjected and that Jews already had means of atonement (repentance, restitution, and sacrifice) included in the law itself, this assumption seems problematical. Interpreters typically appeal to the curse in 3:10, but I argued above that 3:10 refers to the curse that would fall on gentiles who try to remain gentiles while also taking on the yoke of the law.¹⁶⁸ If 3:10 does not describe an active curse, then we have no reason to think that Paul regarded all Jews—let alone all humanity!—as condemned under the curse of the law. If, however, not even the Jews were condemned under the law’s curse, then the purchase in 3:13 must refer to something other than atonement.

I accordingly suggest that this purchase is not so much about setting things right or paying off debts as it is about enabling the Jews to rejoin the nations. How does Jesus’ becoming accursed enable this transition?¹⁶⁹ As a Jew under the law (cf. 4:4), Jesus becomes accursed by being hanged on a tree. The righteousness that his subsequent resurrection—i.e., his reception of the blessing of life—must presume therefore cannot be based on law.¹⁷⁰ For reasons that will become apparent below, Paul has, in accordance with scripture, focused on faith (πίστις) as the alternative basis for righteousness in 3:6–12. In Jesus’ case, this justifying faith manifests in his giving himself over to cursing and death

¹⁶⁸ See pp. 90–97.

¹⁶⁹ Susan Margaret Elliott, “The Rhetorical Strategy of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians in Its Anatolian Cultic Context: Circumcision and the Castration of the *Galli* of the Mother of the Gods” (Ph.D. diss. Loyola University, 1997), 643–47, suggests that, in the context of the Anatolian divine judicial system, Christ’s cursed status could have enabled him to serve as “a ‘counter-curse’ powerful enough to cancel the curse of the law” (645), a function parallel to that played by Attis in the Anatolian society. The difficulty with this suggestion is that Paul gives no indication that his argument depends on such a cultural parallel. To the contrary, his argument in 3:6–14 repeatedly appeals to the *Jewish* scriptures, exhibiting a density of scriptural citation rarely matched in the Pauline epistles. Furthermore, the agitators could easily deny any implicit syncretizing of Jewish scripture with the Anatolian religious culture as unwarranted. We should accordingly seek an explanation of his logic that is consistent with the argument’s ostensible Jewish framework.

¹⁷⁰ For the letter’s assumption that righteousness forms a prerequisite for blessing/life, see the analysis of 3:8–10 above, esp. pp. 91–92.

while trusting that God will nevertheless bless him and faithfully fulfill the promise to him as Abraham's seed (cf. 3:15–18). Significantly, then, Paul's carefully constructed argument absolves God of any injustice or inconsistency in this blessing of a cursed man: God justifies Jesus on the same basis—faith—as he justifies Abraham (3:6–7), the gentiles (3:8–10), and even the Jews (3:11–12).

Jesus' faith does differ from the typical Jewish faith in one crucial particular, however: his faith ultimately finds expression, not in obedience to the law, but in becoming accursed by the law, i.e., in transgressing the law (cf. 3:19).¹⁷¹ In a christological twist on the distinction between faith and law posited in 3:11–12, Jesus thus severs the connection between law observance and faith. Distinguishable elements are separable elements, and the law's secondary nature robs it of any inherent necessity. With Jesus, the primacy of faith over works of law becomes the sufficiency of faith apart from works of law.

Christ thus frees the Jews from the curse of the law by opening a path to righteousness and life that does not tie justifying faith to law observance. In other words, through participation in him,¹⁷² Christ essentially frees the Jews from the law itself—not just its curse—an observation that explains why the parallel reference to Jesus' "[purchasing] those under law" (τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ) in 4:5 makes no mention of a curse.¹⁷³ This freedom from the law's curse accordingly results from a change of dominion—those Jews who believe into Christ are no longer under law (cf. 3:25)—and not an inherent inoculation against the law's curse.¹⁷⁴

171 Chapter 6 will argue that Paul's much debated *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* constructions (Gal 2:16 [2x], 20; 3:22; Rom 3:22, 26; Phil 3:9; cf. Eph 3:12) refer neither to "faith in Christ," nor to the "faithfulness of Christ," but to "Jesus' trust" in God's faithfulness to bless him despite his becoming accursed under the law. See pp. 205–7.

172 This participatory aspect likely explains why Paul refers to "Christ" rather than "Jesus" as the one who becomes accursed.

173 Todd A. Wilson, "'Under Law' in Galatians: A Pauline Theological Abbreviation," *JTS* 56 (2005): 362–92, 365, argues that "under law" functions in Galatians as shorthand for "under the curse of the law," a phrase that, as Wilson admits (365 n. 9), never actually appears in Galatians. "Under the curse" would seem to capture that concept better. Regardless, as the phrasing in 4:5 emphasizes, Paul's point is not that Christ frees the Jews from an (active) curse under which they suffer (contra Wilson, 371–72), but that he frees them from the law itself. Indeed, the curse from which they need deliverance activates only because they leave the law behind.

174 Cf. Wakefield, *Where to Live*, 182.

Indeed, Paul's description of Jesus in 3:13a as "a curse" (κατάρα)¹⁷⁵ rather than as "accursed" (ἐπικατάρατος)—a characterization that would have matched his citation in Gal 3:13b—suggests that the Jews must themselves brave the curse in order to experience this freedom.¹⁷⁶ Because he was hanged on a tree, Jesus remains accursed according to the Jewish law. His subsequent blessing in the resurrection then signifies, not his changed status under law, but his freedom from the law's dominion. Jews who unite with Christ, who become one with him, therefore bring a curse upon themselves.¹⁷⁷ Like Jesus, they too must have faith in God's promise. They must trust that God will bless them despite their becoming accursed under law. They must trust that if, being "cocrucified with Christ" (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι), they die to the law, they will also live with Christ (Gal 2:19–20; cf. Rom 8:17), having been freed from the law. In short, they must share the faith of Christ.¹⁷⁸

This observation then explains Paul's focus on faith as the basis of righteousness. Because the expression of this justifying faith involves the Jews' dying to the law, it effectively emphasizes the law-free nature of their justification in Christ. The law-free nature of the Christian Jews' justification then undermines any potential motivation for Christian gentiles to come under law.

Galatians 3:13 thus offers a christological twist to the distinction between faith and law in 3:11–12. This reading accounts for the focus on Christ's becoming accursed, the identification of Christ as a curse, and the parallel with 4:5.

175 In accordance with the MT's קללת. M. D. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* 22 (1971): 349–61, 350, notes that, according to the remainder of Deut 21:23, the hanged one "is regarded as himself a curse; it is because he is a source of infection to the land that his body must be removed before sunset." As Bernstein, "Study," 26–28, shows, rabbinic interpretations of Deut 21:23 that instead identify the curse as the capital transgression for which the transgressor is hanged (usually blasphemy) have trouble relating the phrase to the rest of the verse. Most scholars read the curse in Galatians simply as an instance of metonymy whose significance remains obscure. See, e.g., Williams, *Galatians*, 93.

176 Cf. Bligh, *Galatians*, 270–71: "every Jew who . . . is united with Christ in his death, undergoes with Christ the curse of the law." He goes on to claim, however, that "the pain and the shame of [the curse] are borne by Christ." As Brondos, *Paul*, 108–9, notes, substitutionary models can make no sense of Paul's repeated calls for believers to participate in Christ's suffering and death.

177 As the rest of this chapter and, especially, Part II will make clear, Jews must unite with Christ to receive a share in the gentiles' blessing and their full Abrahamic inheritance.

178 Cf. Sam K. Williams, "Again *Pistis Christou*," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 431–47, 443: "To adopt this [*pistis*] stance is to trust and obey Him who raised Jesus from the dead, to believe *like* Christ, and thereby to stand *with* Christ in that domain, that power field, created through his death and resurrection. To do so is to become the beneficiary of Christ-faith [*pistis Christou*]" (emphasis original).

Perhaps most importantly, however, this reading also makes sense of the two connected $\text{ἐν}\alpha$ clauses in 3:14, as the following analysis will show.

*The B–B' Twist (3:8–10, 3:14a): So to the Gentiles the Blessing Might
Come in Christ*

The opening $\text{ἐν}\alpha$ in 3:14a indicates that the gentiles' reception of the Abrahamic blessing (3:14a) depends on the prior freeing of the Jews from the law's curse (3:13).¹⁷⁹ Scholars have proposed several different explanations as to why the blessing of *gentiles* requires the deliverance of *Jews* from a curse: the need for 1) Jewish missionaries to evangelize the gentiles,¹⁸⁰ 2) Christ to abolish the dividing wall of Torah (cf. Eph 2:13–18),¹⁸¹ 3) Christ to free the Jews from a false understanding of Torah,¹⁸² 4) a restored Israel to trigger the eschatological pilgrimage of the gentiles,¹⁸³ and 5) the gentiles to be incorporated as proselytes into a restored Israel.¹⁸⁴ The gentiles serve as a mere afterthought in this last proposal, while the suggestion that Christ frees the Jews from nothing more than a misunderstanding seems incommensurate with the high price of Jesus' cursed death on a cross. The remaining proposals each draw on Paul's statements elsewhere or on purported parallels to Jewish thought, but none has an explicit grounding in Gal 3:13–14. That is to say, the purpose clause in 3:14a mentions nothing about missionaries or eschatological pilgrimage, and while 3:13 does refer to the law, it presents the law as a source of cursing rather than division.

What does 3:14a mention? The fronted $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \xi\theta\nu\eta$ in 3:14a clearly emphasizes that Christ's action in 3:13 enables Abraham's blessing to come "into the

179 For the first-person references in 3:13 as encompassing only Jews, see pp. 112–14.

180 Bligh, *Galatians*, 272.

181 Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 140; Lagrange, *Galates*, 73–74; Robinson, "Distinction," 38–39.

182 For the view that Christ frees the Jews from a legalistic understanding, see Burton, *Galatians*, 168–71; from a xenophobic zealot interpretation that esteems sacred violence, see Hamerton-Kelly, "Sacred," 110–11; from a nationalistic understanding of Torah, see Dunn, "Works," 536–37, although Dunn supplements this view with the claim that Christ also tears down the covenantal barrier that distinguishes blessing from curse (cf. Eph 2:13–16).

183 For Christ himself as restored Israel, see Wright, *Climax*, 150–51; Hays, "Galatians," 261. For Jewish Christians as the restored Israel, see Donaldson, "Curse," 99–107. Donaldson has since changed his mind, largely because Rom 11 anticipates a *future* restoration while attributing the gentile mission to Israel's *stumbling*. See Donaldson, *Paul*, 191–97.

184 Donaldson, *Paul*, 245.

gentiles.”¹⁸⁵ The clause, however, also limits the coming of this blessing by the prepositional phrase in the final position: ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “in Christ Jesus.” This final phrase is at least as significant because it provides the christological twist to Paul’s argument in 3:8–10. As previously discussed, this earlier passage concludes from a conflation of Gen 12:3 and 22:18 (Ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Gal 3:8) that the gentiles will be blessed “with the faithful Abraham” (σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ, 3:9). In 3:14a, Paul then further specifies that this blessing comes “in Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), a move that effectively associates “Christ Jesus” with the “your seed” of Gen 22:18 (ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου).¹⁸⁶ The critical question when seeking the logical connection between Gal 3:13 and 3:14a is therefore twofold: Why must Christ free the Jews in order for the blessing of Abraham to come 1) in Christ Jesus 2) into the gentiles?

Paul’s argument in 3:8–10 provides the answer. As previously demonstrated, 3:8–10 argues that God must justify the gentiles by faith because they could not remain gentiles and be under the law without incurring the law’s curse.¹⁸⁷ By implication, then, gentiles cannot come under the law to receive the blessing of Abraham. Christ therefore had to purchase the Jews from the law’s curse so that he himself—a Jew born under the law (4:4)—could become the one bringing the Abrahamic blessing “into the gentiles.” Had he not emerged from under Torah, his uniting with gentiles would have forced them to become either Jews or accursed.¹⁸⁸ Either way, Christ would no longer be bringing a *blessing* into the *gentiles*. Jesus accordingly does not abolish Torah so as to let gentiles enter into Israel’s blessing. He instead creates a path out from under Torah to the nations for himself and any Jews who choose to follow.

185 I understand the εἰς to have its usual locative force of “into” based on the parallel in 4:6, where God sends forth the Spirit of his son “into our hearts” (εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν). For the Spirit as the Abrahamic blessing, see pp. 124–31.

186 Paul makes this identification explicit in 3:16. See pp. 177–80 for more on the significance of the *Aqedah* allusions. My understanding of the Spirit as the blessing that comes to the gentile believers before their baptism into Christ (cf. 3:1–5) suggests that 3:14 portrays the blessing’s coming in Christ Jesus as opposed to its coming to the gentiles who are in Christ Jesus. In other words, I suggest that Paul does not read ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in Gen 22:18 incorporatively (cf. Gal 3:8–9).

187 See pp. 90–97.

188 Cf. Stanley, “Curse,” 506: “God in the death of Jesus Christ has opened up a way of escape for the *Gentiles* from the ‘negative potentiality’ associated with Torah observance” (emphasis original). For gentiles, however, the curse was not just a potentiality but an assured result as long as they remained gentiles.

Just as the freeing of the Jews benefits the gentiles, so the blessing of the gentiles in turn benefits the Jews. Galatians 3:14b addresses this Jewish benefit.

The A–A' Twist (3:6–7, 3:14b): So the Jews Might Receive the Promised Spirit of Sonship

Paul concludes this discussion of Christ's significance with a second ἵνα clause. Following the discussion of gentiles in 3:14a, this clause resumes the first-person references that characterized 3:13. As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion of 3:13–14, even scholars who understand 3:13 to describe Jews often argue that 3:14b broadens the first-person referent to include both Jewish and gentile believers, largely because of the parallel reception of the Spirit in 3:2. This parallel with 3:2 is indeed significant for understanding 3:14b, but not, I suggest, because it indicates that this clause includes gentiles. Instead, as this section will argue, the parallel establishes faith as common ground for both the gentiles' (3:2) and the Jews' (3:14b) reception of the Spirit. This expression of faith then also shows the Jewish Christians to be true sons of Abraham (3:6–7).

Given the parallel with 3:2 (τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε), τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν¹⁸⁹ τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν most likely constitutes an exegetical genitive construction with πνεύματος specifying the content of the promise, i.e., receiving “the promised Spirit.”¹⁹⁰ This conclusion then raises the question of when the Spirit was promised and, perhaps more importantly, to whom. Although several commentators seek the promise in passages from Joel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel,¹⁹¹ Paul

189 The presence of εὐλογίαν instead of ἐπαγγελίαν in several significant (largely Western) textual witnesses (P⁴⁶, D*, Fg*, G, 88*, 489, it^d, g, Marcion, Ambrosiaster, Ephraem, Vigilius) likely results from scribes' conforming a heretofore unseen word (ἐπαγγελίαν) to a similar word that appeared in the preceding clause (εὐλογία). See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 525.

190 For a helpful discussion of alternative interpretations—specifically, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος as signifying 1) what the Spirit promised; 2) the promise for a future giving of the Spirit; or 3) the Spirit as the promise / guarantee of future blessing—that reaches the same conclusion, see Sam K. Williams, “Promise in Galatians: A Reading of Paul's Reading of Scripture,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 709–20, 711–12.

191 E.g., Lee, *Blessing*, 193–98; Matthew S. Harmon, *She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul's Isaianic Gospel in Galatians* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 168; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 146–50; Kwon, *Eschatology*, 115–17; Hays, “Galatians,” 261; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 235; Dunn, *Galatians*, 180. Having examined passages in the OT prophets and intertestamental literature that associate the giving of the Spirit with the eschatological restoration of Israel, Morales, *Spirit*, 109–14, argues that Paul's linking of promise, blessing, and Spirit reflects this larger Jewish milieu. My analysis above, however, has shown no reason to suspect that Paul has the restoration/redemption of Israel

does not cite any of these prophetic texts. Instead, Galatians consistently links the theme of promise to Abraham (3:16–19, 21–22, 29; 4:23, 28). This “promise of the Spirit” in 3:14b should therefore be understood as a promise given to Abraham.¹⁹² Of course, God never explicitly promises Abraham “the Spirit”: his promises to the patriarch all concern seed/offspring, land, and the blessing of the gentiles. Which of these promises does Paul understand as the promise of the Spirit?

The abrupt introduction of the “promise” theme without further explanation suggests that Paul has already alluded to this pledge in the preceding discussion of Abraham (3:6–10), an observation that eliminates the promises concerning land. Of the two remaining options, God’s promise to provide Abraham with a seed—to provide him, that is, with an heir from his own body—presents an intriguing possibility.¹⁹³ In favor of this reading, it is Abraham’s trust in this particular promise that God credits to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6) and that, according to Gal 3:6–7, establishes faith as a defining characteristic of Abraham’s sons. Galatians 3:6–7, however, does not actually mention the promise for seed, making it likely that at least some of the Galatians would miss the connection. Furthermore, Gal 3:15–4:11—a passage whose emphasis on God’s “promise(s)” (ἐπαγγελία, 3:16, 17, 18[2x], 21, 22, 29; ἐπαγγέλλομαι, 3:19) 3:14b proleptically introduces—portrays the promises as spoken to Abraham and to *his seed* (3:16), an odd characterization if Paul has the promise *for seed* in view.

I accordingly suggest that the promise in 3:14b refers instead to the one promise that Paul has explicitly mentioned, namely, God’s promise to bless the gentiles (cf. Gal 3:8).¹⁹⁴ Significantly, God makes this promise both to Abraham (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18) and to his seed (Gen 22:18), so it accords well with the claim in Gal 3:16. This interpretation then implies two corollaries that require further explanation. First, it effectively identifies the Spirit as the promised Abrahamic blessing. Second, given the likelihood that Paul’s first-person plural references in 3:13–14 all refer exclusively to Jews, 3:14b claims that Christ enables the *Jews* (λάβωμεν) to receive a blessing specifically promised to the *gentiles*.

in view—3:10 does not portray Israel as being under a curse—thereby undermining the proposed thematic connection with this unmentioned theological construct.

192 So Williams, “Promise,” 711; Sze-kar Wan, “Abraham and the Promise of the Spirit: Galatians and the Hellenistic-Jewish Mysticism of Philo,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1995* (SBLSP 34; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1995), 6–22. Contra Kwon, *Eschatology*, 109–11.

193 Williams, “Promise,” 714.

194 E.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 168.

To understand these two corollaries, we must first consider the relationship of the two $\text{v}\alpha$ clauses in 3:14a and 14b. Although 3:14b could stand parallel to 3:14a¹⁹⁵—either in apposition to 3:14a or as an additional independent effect of Christ's action in 3:13—discerning the logic behind such a construal proves difficult.¹⁹⁶ Why would Jewish reception of the Spirit through faith (3:14b) require a prior freeing from the law's curse (3:13)? Contrary to the usual interpretation of 3:10, I have argued that there was no active curse preventing the outpouring of God's Spirit on his people.¹⁹⁷ Paul has also already established the Jews as a people whose justification rests ultimately on faith (3:11–12),¹⁹⁸ so the answer cannot involve a switch from justification by law to justification by faith.

Reading the two $\text{v}\alpha$ clauses in 3:14a and 3:14b as sequential rather than parallel¹⁹⁹ enables the blessing of the gentiles in 3:14a to provide the necessary intermediate step between the Jewish Christians' freedom from the curse and

195 So most scholars, e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 214; de Boer, *Galatians*, 214; Hays, "Galatians," 262; Vouga, *Galater*, 77; Witherington, *Grace*, 239; Williams, *Galatians*, 94; Martyn, *Galatians*, 321; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 150; Dunn, *Galatians*, 179; Matera, *Galatians*, 120; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 123; Rohde, *Galater*, 145; Fung, *Galatians*, 151; Bruce, *Galatians*, 167; Burton, *Galatians*, 176; Oepke, *Galater*, 109; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 234–35; Hans Lietzmann, *An die Galater* (4th ed.; HNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971), 19; Schlier, *Galater*, 140; Lagrange, *Galates*, 73.

196 Taylor, "Eschatological Interdependence," 299–301, contends that Paul's typical syntax also argues against a coordinate construal. He identifies 11 instances of consecutive $\text{v}\alpha$ clauses in the Pauline canon outside of the disputed occurrences in Gal 3:14 and 4:5: five clearly function sequentially (1 Cor 4:6, 7:5; 2 Cor 12:7; Eph 5:25–27; Titus 2:4–5), three identify the content of a prayer followed by its purpose (Rom 15:31–32; Phil 1:9–10; Eph 6:19–20), and three could possibly function coordinately, although Taylor does not think that they do (Rom 7:13; 2 Cor 9:3; Col 4:3–4). Conversely, he identifies 11 instances of parallel purposes denoted by a single $\text{v}\alpha$ clause with coordinate verbs—Rom 3:19, 15:31, 16:2; 1 Cor 7:5, 12:25, 14:31; 2 Cor 9:5; Phil 2:10–11, 2:28, 3:8–9; Col 4:8; and 1 Thess 4:12—suggesting that Paul prefers this latter construction to express parallel purposes.

197 See pp. 90–97.

198 See pp. 97–110.

199 So also Taylor, "Eschatological Interdependence," 303; Le Cornu and Shulam, *Galatians*, 209; Stanley, "Curse," 494 n. 45; Betz, *Galatians*, 152; Bligh, *Galatians*, 273; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 140. Explanations include Jew/gentile interdependence (Taylor, with whom I concur), a chronological movement from the time of the gentiles to the eschatological restoration of Israel (Le Cornu, Bligh), a move from blessing/justification to the rewards of justification (Stanley), a move from theological doctrine to experiential reality (Betz), and "moral dependence" (Lightfoot).

their reception of the Spirit. The parallel passage in Gal 4:6—which exhibits a comparable midsentence shift to first person—exhibits a similar sequence: “because you [i.e., gentile Christians] are sons [of God], God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our [i.e., the Jewish Christians’] hearts.”²⁰⁰ Simply noting the recurring pattern, however, does not explain the logic behind it, a logic that at first glance seems rather faulty. After all, according to Acts, the Spirit falls first on the Jews (Acts 2:1–4) and only subsequently on the gentiles (Acts 10:44–47), a basic sequence that surely corresponds to the historical reality. How, then, could the Jewish Christians’ reception of the Spirit depend on the gentiles’ reception of the Abrahamic blessing?

The answer to this perceived difficulty is deceptively simple: the Jewish Christians’ reception of the Spirit depends on the blessing of the gentiles because *Jews receive the Spirit by effectively becoming “gentile” recipients of Abraham’s blessing*. That is to say, whenever Jews “die” to the law (cf. 2:19) and embrace the hanged-on-a-tree Christ—a move that would permanently incur the law’s curse without the freedom purchased in 3:13—they effectively rejoin the nations, thereby qualifying them to share in Abraham’s blessing (3:14a).²⁰¹ In fact, Chapter 6 will argue that Gal 3:19, 21–22 portrays the Jewish law as coming at least in part to distinguish Abraham’s descendants from the other nations so that they would not be able to receive this blessing apart from their incorporation into Christ.²⁰²

Galatians 3:14b therefore depends on 3:14a logically rather than chronologically: even though Jews received the blessing before any gentiles, the blessing had to be available to gentiles since the Jews receive it *as gentiles*. Paul’s earlier linkage of his own dying to the law with his being cocrucified with Christ (2:19–20) and his subsequent appeal for the gentile readers who are considering

200 On 4:6, see pp. 243–46.

201 Cf. Braswell, “Blessing,” 88: “The Jews’ redemption set them upon the stage where this blessing was to take place, beyond the fence and among the nations”; Byrne, *Sons*, 156: “all had to become as ‘Gentiles.’” Contra, e.g., Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 119–20 (on 3:8–9): “Paulus hebt in Gal 3,8f. folglich auch nicht darauf ab, daß die Judenchristen sich allererst als « Heiden » erkennen müßten, um Anspruch auf den in Gen 12,1–3 u. ö. verheißenen Segen zu haben, so daß auch die Ἰουδαῖοι nur als ἔθνη am Segen Abrahams teilhätten.”

202 See esp. pp. 206–7. As Part II will explain, the law excludes Israel from the nations and, thus, from the promise because the Abrahamic seed—defined as someone who is a son of both Abraham and God—must be singular. Without this exclusion, the Jewish sons of Abraham would become sons of God apart from incorporation into Christ simply by receiving the promised blessing of the Spirit, thereby creating many Abrahamic seeds. (Gentiles who receive the Spirit still require incorporation into Christ to establish their tie to Abraham and become his seed.)

circumcision to “become as I [am] for I also [became] as you” (4:12) provide supporting evidence for this line of thought. Understood in this way, Paul’s concluding reference to the reception of the Spirit through faith shows not that the gentiles’ faith-based reception of the Spirit in 3:2 qualifies them as Abraham’s sons but that the Jewish Christians have received the Spirit on the same basis as—indeed, even *as*—gentiles.²⁰³

As noted, this reading shares the common scholarly assumption that the Spirit constitutes the Abrahamic blessing.²⁰⁴ The connection of 3:14a and 3:14b largely requires this equation, a conclusion reached as well by many of the interpreters who read 3:14b as an explanatory parallel to 3:14a.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, it is still worth investigating this connection.

According to Richard Hays, the basis for this connection—which “has no discernible warrant in the text [of Genesis]”—“lies exclusively in the experience of the Christian community, now correlated *ex hypothesi* with the promise to Abraham.”²⁰⁶ This reading essentially makes the gentiles the middle term linking Spirit and blessing: Scripture promises to bless the gentiles in Abraham, and the gentiles have received [the blessing of] the Spirit [in Abraham through Christ]. As Hays acknowledges (“*ex hypothesi*”), however, this formulation begs the question. While the gentiles’ experience of the Spirit might prove the

203 Similarly Wright, *Climax*, 154, although he sees 3:2 and 14b as describing covenant (re-)entry. The conclusion that 3:6–14 and 3:1–5 do not argue the same point undermines the contention of Hays, *Echoes*, 108, that Paul begins with an argument from experience in 3:1–5 because he gives “hermeneutical priority” to the experience of the Spirit rather than to the biblical text.

204 Contra Lee, *Blessing*, 198, who sees the Spirit as providing evidence of and perpetuating the Abrahamic blessing (which she understands as justification by faith).

205 E.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 179–80.

206 Hays, *Echoes*, 110. Cf. Lagrange, *Galates*, 74; Betz, *Galatians*, 152–53. For fuller discussion of the problem (with a somewhat different resolution), see Hays, *Faith*, 181–83, where he suggests that the messianic seed text in Isa 44:3 and, predominantly, Christ himself as Abraham’s seed form the middle term(s). As Wan, “Abraham,” 6–10, notes, the promises of the Spirit in Isa 44 have no direct connection to Abraham, and Christ cannot link the Abrahamic blessing to the Spirit until Paul identifies him as Abraham’s seed in 3:16. Wan bases his own suggestion that Hellenistic (and particularly Philonic) Judaism provides a possible connection by pointing to parallels, not in content, but in the similar way that Philo identifies the Abrahamic promise with Wisdom and then uses that identification to appropriate Abraham as a model for later gentile converts (19). My argument that 3:6–7 concerns Jews rather than gentile converts further erodes this already tenuous connection. The suggestion of Bligh, *Galatians*, 273, that Paul interprets the promise for land as the promise of a kingdom, which the Spirit then fulfills as evidence of Christ’s royal power, similarly requires too many tenuous connections.

truthfulness of Scripture, it cannot establish a link between blessing and the Spirit since it is this link that Hays's reading must assume.

I therefore suggest a different middle term: "life." The connection of God's Spirit with life forms a common Pauline theme²⁰⁷ and fits well within the context of Judaism (e.g., Gen 2:7). Paul's later identification of Isaac—and, thus, the readers—as one born "through a promise" (δι' ἐπαγγελίας, Gal 4:23) and "according to the Spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα, 4:29) indicates that the promised Spirit signifies new life in Galatians as well, in this case being (re-)born (or adopted, 4:5–6) as a child of promise (cf. 3:2, 4:28).²⁰⁸ It also testifies to Paul's understanding of the Spirit's activity in Abraham's life.

The quintessential Deuteronomic definition of blessing as life (Deut 30:19) then provides the other half of the equation. Paul effectively invokes this definition when he contrasts the Abrahamic blessing with the Deuteronomic curse in Gal 3:9–10 (cf. 3:13), thereby establishing an implicit *gezerah shawah* that equates this blessing with its Deuteronomic counterpart.²⁰⁹ He can thus identify the Spirit with Abraham's blessing because the Spirit supplies the life inherent in the concept of blessing. Ironically, then, Jews receive the blessing of the Deuteronomic covenant ("life") by transgressing its requirements unto death.

This understanding of the Abrahamic blessing as life and, thus, as the Spirit also makes sense within the context of Gen 22. In Gen 22:17, God immediately follows (and interprets?) his promise to bless Abraham with a promise to multiply his seed, a promise of life. The ensuing verse then connects the blessing of the nations/gentiles with this seed (ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου, Gen 22:18). Since, as Chapter 4 will argue, Paul portrays Gen 22 as the ratification of Abraham's

207 Rom 8:2, 6, 11; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 6:8; cf. John 6:63.

208 Cf. Williams, "Promise," 716, who argues that the promise for innumerable descendants directly implies the promise of the Spirit since the Spirit functions as "the *means* by which the sons of Abraham would be created out of people [Jews and gentiles] who had been enslaved." This way of formulating Paul's logic, however, raises the question of why simply having the Spirit would make someone a son of *Abraham*, especially since Paul subsequently relates that status (for the gentiles at least) specifically to their being in Christ (3:29).

209 Lee, *Blessing*, 184–85, rightly notes the connection of "life," but her determination that Paul understands the Abrahamic blessing as justification by faith leads her to conclude that Paul unites the Abrahamic and Deuteronomic "blessings" through the restored relationship with God that each presupposes. The attempt of Wilcox, "Upon the Tree," 96–97, to justify the connection of the Abrahamic and Deuteronomic contexts by arguing that the Abrahamic promise for land links the uncited portion of Deut 21:23 with a citation of Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8 relies on a promise for land that plays no role in Gal 3:6–14.

divine adoption, the promised offspring must be sons not only of Abraham but also of God, a status that requires their reception of the Spirit (cf. Gal 4:5–6). Those who receive the blessing of the Spirit thus receive the same blessing that Abraham receives in Gen 22, namely, adoption as a son of God. Hence, they are blessed “with the faithful Abraham” (σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ, Gal 3:9). Viewed through the lens of divine adoption, Gen 22:17–18 accordingly provides a basis for connecting the blessing of Abraham and the blessing of the nations/gentiles with life and (implicitly) the giving of the Spirit, even if the verses do not explicitly equate the four elements.

The *Aqedah* story also enables 3:14b to bring together three lines of argument that together redefine the Jews’ Abrahamic sonship. First, Gal 3:14b provides a christological twist to the claim in 3:6–7 that true sons of Abraham must share their forefather’s faith-based righteousness. Significantly, Abraham’s righteous trust in God’s promise to provide an heir from his own body (Gen 15:4–6) is what enables him to offer Isaac in the *Aqedah*: Abraham knows that Isaac, as his promised heir, cannot inherit and produce more descendants if he is dead. He therefore trusts God to restore his son to him alive (cf. Gen 22:5).²¹⁰ This faith in God’s ability to bring life from the dead is accordingly the faith that Abraham’s sons must share (3:6–7; cf. Rom 4:16–22). In 3:14b, this faith becomes a willingness to incur the law’s curse by embracing the crucified Christ, trusting solely in God’s promised blessing. Indeed, it is through *this* faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως, 3:14b; cf. 3:6–7, 8, 9, 11, 12), a faith that finds expression not in observing the law but in transgressing it (cf. 3:5), a faith parallel to Jesus’ own trust in God on the cross, that Jews prove themselves to be sons worthy of their forefather. Galatians 3:14b accordingly transforms 3:6–7 from a principle distinguishing Jews from Abraham’s other physical descendants into a principle distinguishing Christian Jews from non-Christian Jews.

Of course, Abraham is not the only participant in the *Aqedah*. Scholars have long noted the parallels between Isaac and Jesus, each of whom gets “on the wood” (ἐπὶ ξύλου, Gal 3:13; cf. ἐπάνω τῶν ξύλων, Gen 22:9), trusting his father to see him through death to life.²¹¹ This reading of Gal 3:14b, however, suggests that Paul also parallels Jewish Christians with Isaac. Like Isaac, they too must get “on the wood” (cf. Gal 2:20), trusting that the law’s curse of death will not prevent them from receiving the promised blessings of life and inheritance.

210 Hence James 2:21–24 identifies the *Aqedah* as the fulfillment of Gen 15:6.

211 See, e.g., Hahn, *Kinship*, 255–56; Hahn, “Covenant,” 93; Wilcox, “Upon the Tree,” 97. Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The Atonement—An Adequate Reward for the Akedah? (Ro 8:32),” in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honor of Matthew Black* (eds. E. Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969), 15–29, 23, argues that Gal 3:13–14 understands the ram—not Isaac—as the type of Christ.

Paul thus suggests that true Abrahamic sonship depends on conformity, not to the law's demands, but to the image of Isaac, the original promised son and heir.

Finally, Jews who exhibit this justifying faith receive the blessing that comes to the nations, i.e., "the promise of the Spirit." Anticipating the fuller argument in 3:15–4:11, this identification of the blessing with the Spirit provides the rationale for Paul's redefinition of the Jews' Abrahamic sonship. As I will argue in Part II, the Spirit transforms Abrahamic sons into Abrahamic seed by adopting them as sons of God (4:5–6). Paul accordingly identifies the Spirit as the key component differentiating Abraham's sons of promise from the merely physical descendants in 4:28–29. Only by receiving the Spirit do Jews become fully Abraham's sons, i.e., heirs descended from Abraham's own body (Gen 15:5–6) who share their father's justifying faith and adoption into God's household.

Sons Conclusion

Part I has argued that 3:6–14 constitutes a tightly composed, four-step argument that differentiates Jewish faith from law observance and carries significant implications for understanding the Jews' Abrahamic sonship. The first step (3:6–7) reminds Paul's readers that biological descent alone does not suffice to establish Abrahamic sonship: his true sons must also share their forefather's faith-based righteousness. The second step (3:8–10) then advances the argument by demonstrating from the integrity of scripture that God also justifies the gentiles based on faith. Because God promises to bless them as *gentiles*, the justifying faith underlying their blessing cannot find expression in observing Jewish law. In truth, the Jews' justification ultimately rests on faith as well—no one actually earns their righteousness through law observance—a point made in the third step (3:11–12).

Having carefully constructed his argument, building each step on shared premises and previous conclusions so as to win general agreement, Paul then provides a christological twist in the argument's climax (3:13–14) that throws these seemingly tame propositions into an entirely new light. By embracing the crucified Christ, Jews take on his curse under the law. Accordingly, like Jesus before them, they must die to the law and rely completely on their faith in God's promise for their righteousness (3:11–12, 13). Jews who thus abandon the law in faith effectively become gentiles in Christ,²¹² which qualifies them to share in the Abrahamic blessing to the nations (3:8–10, 14a). Receiving

212 Abrahamic descent still distinguishes Jewish Christians from "other" gentiles, i.e., they form a distinct nation among the other nations. This situation nevertheless differs

this blessing of the Spirit through their act of faith then establishes their full Abrahamic sonship: the Spirit brings them into Abraham's adoptive family as sons of God, while physical descent and their supreme act of faith qualify them as sons worthy of their forefather's example (3:6–7, 14b). Accordingly, in an ironic christological twist befitting the gospel, Jews become full sons of Abraham only by abandoning their status as sons of Abraham.

The argument's alternating focus on Jews (3:6–7, 11–12, 13, 14b) and gentiles (3:8–10, 14a) thus mimics the interdependence of Jew and gentile that the content describes: the gentiles receive the blessing as a result of God's faithfulness to the Jewish patriarch, while the Jews receive the blessing because of the grace shown to the gentiles. The argument then supports Paul's larger goal of dissuading the gentile Galatians from undergoing circumcision by demonstrating that Jewish Christians have themselves received the blessing of the Spirit only by abandoning the law. If Jewish Christians have essentially surrendered their status under law to become like the gentiles (cf. 4:12) and receive the gentiles' blessing (cf. 3:2), then what possible gain could the gentiles receive from reversing that process to become Jews (cf. 2:14)?

I have suggested throughout that Paul's audience would likely have been able to follow this argument. If that is indeed the case, then why have nearly two millennia of subsequent interpreters missed this apparently "obvious" reading? The preceding pages have mentioned several factors, but three in particular deserve special mention.

First, as noted in Chapter 2, the seemingly universal reading of 3:6–7 as a redefinition of Abrahamic sonship truly becomes a viable option only when readers approach the text with the preunderstanding that Paul does, in fact, redefine this sonship to include gentiles. While we can easily understand why interpreters in the second century and later would approach the text in this way, we have no reason to suspect that the Galatians would have shared this presupposition. They would therefore probably have heard 3:6–7 as highlighting an essential characteristic of those already recognized as Abraham's sons. Furthermore, although some features of Paul's argument can be read in ways that seem to support a redefinition—albeit not without introducing significant problems—none of these features require this reading. Limiting the scope of 3:6–7 to Jews also enables a more coherent argument to emerge in 3:6–14. The argument that emerges, however, differs considerably from construals that begin with a redefinition of Abrahamic sonship. Misunderstanding

from their status under law since the law removes them from the nations entirely. See Chapter 5.

these opening verses therefore severely inhibits an interpreter's ability to follow the rest of Paul's argument.

Second, interpreters routinely assume that Paul's generic references to faith in this passage all have a christological focus. The significance of this assumption goes beyond the logical problems that it creates for a coherent argument. If Paul routinely taught his gentile converts to put their faith in Jesus or spoke of faith primarily in reference to Christ, then it becomes more likely that his audience would have had the same difficulties understanding the argument that have plagued later interpreters. If, however, Paul's teaching retained the traditional Jewish understanding of faith as directed towards God, then the theocentric interpretation of faith that the proposed interpretation requires becomes the default reading. In this regard, the reading offered here fully affirms the assessment of Sam Williams:

we do not find the expression *pistis en Christō* in Paul's letters because Paul was not accustomed to thinking of Christ as the "object" of faith. Whether one stresses faith as a response to the gospel (see *akoē pisteōs* at Gal 3:3,5), faith as confession (Rom 10:9–10), faith as trust (Romans 4), or faith as obedience (see *hypakoē pisteōs* at Rom 1:5), the person of Christ is not faith's object. *God* is. (emphasis original)²¹³

As Williams further observes, the one phrase often thought to signify an exception in Galatians—*ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν* in 2:16—should probably be read not as "we believed in Christ" but, parallel to the phrase *εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε* in 3:27, as "we believed into Christ." In other words, it functions as transfer terminology.²¹⁴

The third problem concerns the question of Israel. Unfortunately, it did not take long for the church to develop a strong anti-Jewish stance. Seeing Christ as the solution to the universal human problems of sin and condemnation, this theological preference for the (largely gentile) church made it easy to overlook or downplay the statements in Paul suggesting an inherent value in Judaism, a trend whose reversal gained serious momentum only with the relatively recent emergence of the New Perspective. In their desire to affirm Judaism, however, adherents of the New Perspective have, I suggest, consistently reversed the nature of the underlying theological problem in Gal 3:6–14: despite the fact that Paul only ever speaks of Abraham's blessing as coming to gentiles (3:8–9),

²¹³ Williams, "*Pistis*," 434.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 442–43. On the significance of the shift from (Jewish) first person in 2:16 to (gentile) second person in 3:27, see pp. 219–20.

these interpreters typically assume that 3:6–14 seeks to incorporate the nations into Israel so that gentiles can share in the Jews' blessing. Although their susceptibility to the agitators reveals an understanding far from perfect, the original readers would presumably have had a better chance of understanding the discussion of Israel's relationship to the church given their familiarity with the ancient context and Paul's thought.

Of course, Paul's argument in 3:6–14 still raises several questions. Why does Jesus triumph over the curse when other sons of Abraham do not? If the law is secondary, why was it given in the first place? Finally, if 3:6–14 discusses only Jews as sons of Abraham, then what relationship—if any—do gentile Christians have to Abraham? It is to these questions that Paul turns in 3:15–4:11, the subject of Part II.

PART 2

Seed (Gal 3:15–4:11)

“One [seed], who is Christ”

GAL 3:16



Testamentary Adoption, Dual Sonship, and the Identification of Christ as the Abrahamic Seed in Gal 3:15–16

Overview of Seed

As detailed in Part I, Gal 3:6–14 argues that Christ's accursed death on the cross differentiates Jewish faith from law observance. The full sons of Abraham then become those Jews who follow their forefather's example of faith by uniting with Christ / dying to the law so that they might share in the gentiles' blessing. Galatians 3:15–4:11 shifts the point of inquiry from Abraham's true *sons* (υἱοί, 3:7; cf. 3:14b) to his true *heirs* (κληρονόμοι, 3:29; cf. 3:18; 4:1, 7), whom Paul identifies as Abraham's "seed" (σπέρμα, 3:16, 19, 29). Sons and heirs are, of course, closely related. Paul even invokes the principle "if a son, then also an heir" in 4:7. Nevertheless, this passage does not build on the preceding analysis of sonship but instead proceeds along an altogether different line of argument.

Whereas 3:6–14 argues from Abraham's definitive example and scripture, 3:15–4:11 argues from a series of socio-legal parallels drawn largely from the realm of contemporary family and inheritance practices. Thus, in Gal 3:15–20 Paul applies the legal principle that no one sets aside or supplements a ratified διαθήκη to God's διαθήκη with Abraham. In 3:24–25 he invokes the image of a παιδαγωγός as a metaphor for understanding the role of the law. Finally, he grounds the argument of 4:1–5 in the principle that a minor heir remains under the supervision of guardians and stewards until the time set by the father. This latter passage also invokes adoption (υιοθεσία, 4:5), a practice that elucidates Paul's reference to the "sons of God" (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) in 3:26.

Despite the different types of argument, the aforementioned principle "if a son, then also an heir" (4:7) suggests that the analysis of Abrahamic heirship in 3:15–4:11 should complement the analysis of sonship in 3:6–14. Part II will accordingly argue that Jews who prove themselves worthy sons of their forefather by uniting with Christ in faith (3:6–14) do, in fact, become Abraham's full heirs—along with the gentiles in Christ—by virtue of their resulting status as Abrahamic seed (3:15–4:11). The same patterns of Jew-gentile interdependence, universal dependence on Christ, and Christian freedom from the law also emerge. Paul thus strengthens his overall case by reaching the same results through two different means.

How, then, does Paul understand Abrahamic heirship? He introduces the concept of the Abrahamic seed in Gal 3:16 with a seemingly straightforward scriptural observation: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.” Although David Daube notes a potentially early rabbinic tradition that regards Abraham’s σπέρμα as a specific individual,¹ most Jews would presumably have understood the mention of Abraham’s seed (σπέρματι) as a collective reference to all of the patriarch’s descendants through Isaac (and Jacob). Paul, however, interprets the singular σπέρματι quite differently: “It does not say ‘And to seeds,’ as concerning many, but as concerning one: ‘And to your seed,’ who is Christ.” Curiously, while Paul *argues* for the seed’s singular nature, he simply *asserts* its identification with Christ.

Traditional interpretations argue that 3:16 denies the collective understanding of Abraham’s σπέρμα so as to enable the subsequent exclusive identification of the seed with Christ.² Such an argument would make little sense. Scholarly appeals to Jewish exegetical practices notwithstanding,³ the common use of σπέρμα as a collective noun renders the Galatians unlikely to find this interpretation persuasive based strictly on grammar. Indeed, many scholars contend that Paul’s insistence on the seed’s singularity already presupposes its identification with Christ.⁴ Moreover, even granting the seed’s singularity would not preclude its identification with Isaac. The crucial question in establishing Christ as the seed would accordingly seem to be “Isaac or Christ?” not “plural or singular?” This construal of 3:16 thus has Paul advancing a foreseeably tendentious argument that both begs the question and leaves the core issue undressed, a rather unsatisfying interpretation.

1 *Seder Olam Rabbah* 3 reconciles the 400 years of sojourning for Abraham’s “seed” prophesied in Gen 15:13 with the actual 430 years of sojourning claimed in Ex 12:40–41 by arguing that the latter span begins with the covenant in Gen 15, the former, with the subsequent birth of the seed, i.e., Isaac (cf. Gen 21:12). See David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 2; London: Athlone, 1956), 438–44. On the possible Jewish background of Paul’s argument in 3:16, see, too, Max Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the New Testament and the Targumim,” *JSNT* 5 (1979): 2–20.

2 E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 223; Hansen, *Galatians*, 98; Matera, *Galatians*, 131; Betz, *Galatians*, 157; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 132–34.

3 E.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 183–85; Hays, “Galatians,” 264; Williams, *Galatians*, 95. George Lyons, *Galatians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC; Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012), 206, curiously finds Paul’s seed analysis exegetically unpersuasive yet theologically convincing. (What grounds this theological conviction?)

4 E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 340; Hansen, *Galatians*, 98.

The way forward, I suggest, lies in reversing the traditionally perceived direction of Paul's argument. That is to say, I suggest that 3:16 does not establish the seed's singularity to support the otherwise asserted identification of the seed as Christ; rather, in accordance with the verse's argumentative emphasis, the seed's asserted identification as Christ reinforces the argument for its singularity. This suggestion then raises two critical questions. First, on what grounds does Paul identify Christ instead of the seemingly more appropriate Isaac as Abraham's single seed? Second, if 3:16 does not establish the seed's singularity to support its identification with Christ, then why does Paul establish this singularity? This chapter addresses the former question, Chapter 5, the latter. Chapter 6 then concludes Part II by showing how Paul portrays the interdependent union of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God in Christ as the singular Abrahamic seed that fulfills and ends the law.

The Problem of Christ's Identity as the Abrahamic Seed

As mentioned above, 3:16 simply asserts Christ's identity as the sole Abrahamic seed. This lack of an explicit argument for the seed's identity is striking in such a polemical letter. It suggests that Paul does not see this point as needing further defense,⁵ but on what basis could he identify—and expect his agitated audience to accept without further argument—Christ rather than the seemingly more appropriate Isaac as Abraham's single seed?

An ideal explanation would satisfy three criteria. First, its logic should be readily apparent to the gentile Galatians. Second, it should be robust enough to withstand any superficial attempts by the agitators to undermine the argument simply by reinstituting Isaac as Abraham's seed. Finally, it should be able to accommodate Paul's own subsequent appeals to Isaac as Abraham's son born "through a promise" (4:23; cf. 4:28).

Interpreters have suggested a handful of explanations, none of which fully meet these criteria. Proposals that Paul discerns an additional spiritual meaning in the text⁶ or that Christ represents the "summation" of all Israel⁷ essentially accept that Genesis identifies Isaac as Abraham's seed, a position that respects the seed's OT context at the expense of Paul's emphasis on its singular

5 That the identification presupposes a debate with non-Christian Jews—so Walter, "Paulus," 354; Nanos, *Irony*, 154–55—therefore seems unlikely.

6 Ellicott, *Galatians*, 77; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 142; Lagrange, *Galates*, 77–79.

7 Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 142.

nature.⁸ At the same time, reading the Genesis promise as directed to Christ requires more substantial grounding than mere personal conviction⁹ or divine decree¹⁰ lest a simple appeal to the biblical text undermine the argument.

Scholars have therefore increasingly argued that Paul's conclusion presupposes the Jewish exegetical practice of *gezerah shawah*, a type of argument by lexical analogy. In this view, Paul interprets the Abrahamic σπέρμα in terms of the singular Davidic σπέρμα promised in 2 Sam 7:12–14,¹¹ a passage with recognized messianic connotations in Paul's day (4Q174, Flor 1 I, 10–11).¹² The recognition of Jesus as the Christ then enables his identification as the Davidic seed and, consequently, as the Abrahamic seed. This interpretation, however, improbably requires that Paul would leave such a crucial point to the gentile Galatians' ability not only to discern the presence and intervening steps of this Jewish exegetical method but also to accept its validity in the face of potential agitator rebuttals.¹³

Given these difficulties, a few interpreters propose that Paul identifies Christ as Abraham's seed based on Christ's fulfilling some role expected—perhaps only in retrospect—of the seed, either that he completes the aborted sacrifice of Isaac “on the wood” (ἐπάνω τῶν ξύλων, Gen 22:9; cf. ἐπὶ ξύλου, Gal 3:13) as a typological fulfillment¹⁴ or else that he fulfills the promise that the gentiles will be blessed in Abraham's seed (Gen 22:18; cf. Gal 3:8).¹⁵ Although these proposals find support in the context of Galatians, they are not clear implications of the Genesis text. Accordingly, even if perceptive readers noticed the connections with Gen 22, the agitators could still argue that Isaac's aborted sacrifice leaves no expectation of a further fulfillment and that the blessing of the

8 For problems with the suggestion that ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός emphasizes the (collective) seed's unity rather than the seed's numerically singular nature, see p. 183.

9 Fung, *Galatians*, 155–56.

10 Calvin, “Galatians,” 94–95.

11 Cf. Ps [LXX] 88:5, 30, 37 [Eng 89:4, 29, 36].

12 Martyn, *Galatians*, 340 n. 161; Williams, *Galatians*, 95; Dunn, *Galatians*, 184; Hays, *Echoes*, 85; Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 84–87; Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Promise and Fulfillment,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 121–36, 130; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 239–40. Wilcox, “Seed,” 5–6, suggests that the connection was already present in the Targumim.

13 Similar problems trouble the suggestion of Harmon, *She Must*, 150–55, that the identification depends on an allusion to Isa 41:8 (and Isa 41–54 more broadly).

14 Hahn, *Kinship*, 263–64; Wilcox, “Upon the Tree,” 97–98; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 240.

15 Becker, “Galater,” 53; Schoeps, *Paul*, 180–81; John Brown, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), 144.

gentiles in Christ results from his membership in Isaac's seed. We thus arrive at an impasse: Paul's argument does not allow the seemingly straightforward reading of Isaac as the promised seed, but any attempt to read Christ as that seed founders on the agitators' ability to refute the claim with relative ease.

I contend that the Hellenistic practice of testamentary adoption enables us to break this impasse. More specifically, I suggest that Gal 3:15–4:11 understands God's διαθήκη with Abraham as his testamentary adoption of the patriarch. The promised seed who inherits must accordingly be a naturally born son not only of Abraham but also of God. Jesus' divine sonship (Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4) is therefore what distinguishes him from other Jews and qualifies him as the sole seed.

Since it unites three crucial elements in Gal 3:15–4:11—διαθήκαι (3:15, 17), inheritance (3:18, 29; 4:1, 7), and adoption (4:5; cf. 3:26)—testamentary adoption would seem to offer a rather obvious lens through which to view this passage. Nevertheless, most scholars never seriously explore this potential background,¹⁶ largely because it has not seemed to be a truly viable option in Jewish, Roman, or Greek law. Jewish law simply had no concept of testamentary adoption. Greek and Roman cultures, in contrast, each knew a form of the practice, but each form presents a challenge for identifying it as the background for Galatians.

In the Roman Empire, testamentary adoption seems to have been more of a *condicio nominis ferendi* whereby a testamentary heir was obliged to take the testator's name in order to inherit.¹⁷ This taking of the name did not change an heir's filiation and tribe—indeed, it seems not even to have been legally enforceable¹⁸—so such “adoptions” were not true adoptions.¹⁹ Some classicists

16 Ramsay, *Galatians*, 351; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, “The Irrevocable Will,” in *Keys to Galatians: Collected Essays* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2012), 97–114; repr. from *RB* 106 (1999), and Marc Rastoin, *Tarse et Jérusalem: La double culture de l'apôtre Paul en Galates 3,6–4,7* (AnBib 152; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003), 180–85, are prominent exceptions. See, too, Greer M. Taylor, “The Function of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ in Galatians,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 58–76, 66–67, 70, 75, who argues for testamentary adoption from a proposed Roman background.

17 Cf. *Dig.* 36.1.65.10, citing Gaius with regard to *fidei commissa*.

18 Hugh Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81–83. Tiberius, e.g., dropped the name of his adopter (M. Gallius) when it became politically expedient to do so (Suetonius, *Tib.* 6.3).

19 For a concise discussion of Roman naming procedures as they relate to (testamentary) adoption, see Olli Salomies, “Names and Adoptions in Ancient Rome: The Possibility of Using Personal Names for the Study of Adoption in Rome,” in *Adoption et fosterage* (ed. Mireille Corbier; Paris: De Boccard, 1999), 141–56, 142–46.

dispute this conclusion for the period of the (late) Republic, based largely on the Senate's recognition of Octavian's testamentary "adoption" by Julius Caesar as a real *adrogatio* adoption (see Appian, *Bell. civ.* 3.94).²⁰ Even in the late Republic, however, women who could not otherwise adopt nevertheless practiced testamentary adoption (e.g., Cicero, *Att.* 7.8.3).²¹ That no Roman jurist ever discusses the procedures or legal ramifications of such adoptions also argues against their legal reality.²² Most scholars today accordingly deny that Roman testaments could truly effect adoption.²³ As for Octavian, we should probably attribute the Senate's ratification of his presumed adoptive status more to the young consul's political force and cunning than to strict legality.²⁴

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- 20 So Theodor Mommsen, "Zur Lebensgeschichte des jüngeren Plinius," in *Gesammelte Schriften IV: Historische Schriften I* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1906), 366–468, 397–404. Olli Salomies, *Adoptive and Polyonymous Nomenclature in the Roman Empire* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 97; Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1992), 7–10, also points to the testamentary adoptions of Cicero's friend Atticus and a certain Metellus Scipio as probable real adoptions based on the subsequent appearance of the adoptive fathers in their filiations (Nepos, *Att.* 5.2 / Cicero, *Att.* 3.20 and Dio 40.51.3 / Cicero, *Fam.* 8.8.5, respectively). Cf. Marcel-Henri Prévost, *Les Adoptions politiques à Rome sous la République et le Principat* (Publications de l'Institut de droit romain de l'Université de Paris 5; Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1949), 29–34; Fritz Schulz, *Classical Roman Law* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 145. Lindsay, *Adoption*, 85–86, 161–62, counters this evidence by noting that these two adoptees likely had strong personal reasons (solidifying a controversial inheritance and pride in the lineage, respectively) for taking their adopters' names.
- 21 Roman adoptions involved the transfer of *patria potestas*, thereby making it impossible for women to adopt (Lindsay, *Adoption*, 83).
- 22 Ibid., 82. He notes, e.g., that true adoptions required the presence of both parties (*Dig.* 1.7.25 [Ulpian]), an unattainable condition in testamentary cases that we would have expected jurists to discuss. Mommsen, "Lebensgeschichte," 398 n. 1, explains the silence of the later jurists on the grounds that they focus on the then-current, nonadoptive form of the practice without regard to its origin or historical development. Salomies, "Names," 146, similarly suggests that the late Republic represented a time of transition wherein non-adoptive versions of testamentary adoption emerged and overlapped with truly adoptive testaments, a direction of development Lindsay rightly critiques as "inherently implausible" (84–85).
- 23 Lindsay, *Adoption*, 78. See, e.g., Christiane Kunst, *Römische Adoption: Zur Strategie einer Familienorganisation* (FAB 10; Hennef: Clauss, 2005), 117–23; Jane F. Gardner, *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 128–29; Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills 200 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 144–46; Ronald Syme, "Clues to Testamentary Adoption," in *Roman Papers IV* (ed. Anthony R. Birley; Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 159–73, 159.
- 24 Lindsay, *Adoption*, 84, 182–89; Walter Schmitthenner, *Oktavian und das Testament Cäsars: Eine Untersuchung zu Politischen Anfängen des Augustus* (Zetemata 4; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1952), 39–64.

Moreover, even if Roman testaments could produce legal adoptions, the *adrogatio* procedure for adopting *sui iuris* individuals would still have required the passage of a *lex curiata* in Rome, making testamentary adoption an unlikely practice to have spread to the provinces.²⁵

In contrast, as the legal speeches of the fourth century BCE Attic orators make clear, Athens practiced true testamentary adoption. A Hellenistic background thus becomes the most likely option if Gal 3:15–4:11 invokes such a practice. The problem here stems from the great chronological and geographical distance that separates the Attic orators from Paul's readers: until relatively recently, classical scholars largely agreed that testamentary adoption did not survive even in Athens past the fourth century BCE, let alone extend into first century CE Greco-Roman Galatia. Recent reevaluations of the evidence, however, have substantially undermined this earlier consensus, making it possible to show the Galatians' likely familiarity with the Hellenistic practice.

This chapter accordingly proceeds as follows. It first seeks to establish the viability of Hellenistic testamentary adoption as a background for Paul's argument. It then returns to Galatians, arguing that this Hellenistic practice does indeed form the socio-legal background for Paul's *υιοθεσία* and *διαθήκη* language. Finally, the chapter concludes by showing how the application of this concept to God's *διαθήκη* with Abraham leads to the identification of Christ—as Isaac—as Abraham's sole seed.

The Viability of Greek Testamentary Adoption as Background for Paul's Identification

The legal speeches of the fourth century BCE Athenian orators provide our best information about Greek testamentary adoption. Based largely on these speeches, modern scholars typically identify three forms of adoption practiced in ancient Athens: 1) *inter vivos* adoption, in which an heir was adopted during the lifetime of an adopter; 2) testamentary adoption, in which an heir was named and adopted through a will (*διαθήκη*); and 3) posthumous adoption, in which an intestate heir could decide to enroll in the *οἶκος* of the deceased. While these divisions provide a helpful rubric, Lene Rubinstein notes that the Athenians themselves viewed all adoptions as composing "a single category." The only significant difference between *inter vivos* adoptions and testamentary/posthumous adoptions was procedural rather than qualitative: adoptions

25 On the geographical implications of *adrogatio* adoptions, see Gardner, *Family*, 130. She points out that this geographical restriction had been removed by the time of Diocletian at end of the third century CE.

that did not occur during an adopter's lifetime required the additional step of having the courts recognize the potential adoptee's right to inherit.²⁶

While the legal basis for posthumous adoption remains obscure, both *inter vivos* and testamentary adoptions rely on a law attributed to the sixth century BCE Athenian *archon* Solon. Solon decreed that any man who had not himself been adopted²⁷ and who was bereft of legitimate sons could dispose of his property (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ διαθέσθαι) in whatever way he desired, just as long as he was not deprived of his right mind by insanity, old age, drugs, disease, women, or compulsion.²⁸ In modern societies, where adoptions serve primarily to meet the needs and welfare of a child adoptee, this law would seem to have little relevance for adoption. Adoptions in the ancient world, however, served primarily to provide an otherwise childless—or at least sonless—adopter with an (often adult) heir to care for him in his old age (e.g., Isaeus 2.10) and, more importantly for testamentary adoption, continue the οἶκος and the associated household cults that honored and cared for the family's dead (e.g., Isaeus 7.32).²⁹ The fourth century BCE orator Isaeus accordingly refers to this Solonic law as “the law concerning adoption” (τὸν νόμον τὸν περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως, 2.26; cf. 2.24) and appeals to it as the sole ground for both *inter vivos* (2.13) and testamentary (6.7–9) adoptions.³⁰

Isaeus records seven clear instances of adoption by διαθήκη.³¹ We thus have ample evidence for testamentary adoption in fourth century BCE Athens, none of which suggests an institution in decline. Why, then, do scholars commonly conclude that testamentary adoption did not survive past the fourth century? We admittedly have no further references to testamentary adoptions in Athens after the time of the orators. When viewed in the light of evolutionary scenarios positing the increasing secularization and, in some cases, individualization of the Athenian οἶκος, this silence suggests demise. It suggests demise

26 Lene Rubinstein, “Adoption in Classical Athens,” in *Adoption et fosterage* (ed. Mireille Corbier; Paris: De Boccard, 1999), 45–62, 47–49.

27 The law specifically excepts those who had been adopted prior to Solon's becoming *archon*, a stipulation that the orators could then generalize to apply to all adoptees (e.g., Demosthenes 44.67–68). This stipulation also shows that the Athenian institution of adoption did not originate with Solon.

28 Cited in Demosthenes 46.14.

29 While intestate heirs would be required to observe certain funerary rites during the initial mourning period, only a (natural or adopted) son would have ongoing cultic commemoration duties. See Lene Rubinstein, *Adoption in IV. Century Athens* (Opuscula Graecolatina 34; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1993), 68–76.

30 For other appeals to Solon's law, see Isaeus 3.68, 4.16, 6.9; Demosthenes 44.68, 46.14.

31 Isaeus 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11.8, and 11.41–42.

because these proposed societal changes undermine the principal motivation for testamentary adoption, namely, the preservation of the household and its cults. Apart from Enlightenment ideals of progress, however, little evidence for such changes has emerged. They prove especially difficult to reconcile with the apparently widespread use of testamentary adoption in fourth century Athens.³²

Scholars typically resolve this discrepancy between the proposed decline in motivation for testamentary adoption and the practice's widespread use by pointing to a second acknowledged motivation for such adoptions, namely, circumventing the order of intestate succession.³³ This thwarting of intestate heirs relates to the transfer of property; it has nothing to do with adoption *per se*. Scholars therefore often suggest that fourth century Athenians continued to adopt simply because they had no other way to bequeath their estate to a universal heir. The orators' repeated references to the preservation of the οἶκος and its cults can then be dismissed as pious posturings with little relevance to actual practice. Furthermore, the clear bestowal of legacies apart from adoption in the early Hellenistic will of Epicurus (died circa 270 BCE) would then indicate that Hellenistic διαθήκαι soon abandoned this vestige of a bygone era. Thus, Louis Gernet, e.g., argues that the application of Solon's law progressed from *inter vivos* adoptions to testamentary adoptions to adoptive testaments to nonadoptive testaments.³⁴

32 Cf., too, the primarily archaeological analysis of ancient Athenian funerary practices in S. C. Humphreys, "Family Tombs and Tomb Cult in Ancient Athens: Tradition or Traditionalism?," *JHS* 100 (1980): 96–126, 104, 112–13, 122–23, suggesting that private familial tombs and their associated cults actually increased in the late fifth / fourth centuries BCE.

33 E.g., Demosthenes 44.63.

34 Louis Gernet, *Droit et société dans la Grèce ancienne* (Publications de l'Institut de droit romain de l'Université de Paris 13; Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1955), 121–49. Evolutionary models often understand Solon's law to have given rise, whether by design or extension, to the very concept of a will (διαθήκη; cf. διαθέσθαι), a conclusion that effectively identifies the first Greek testaments as instruments of adoption. See A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968–71), 1:82–84, 150. For the contrary view that (nonadoptive) testaments existed before Solon's law, see Robin Lane Fox, "Aspects of Inheritance in the Greek World," in *Crux: Essays in Greek History Presented to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix on His 75th Birthday* (eds. P. A. Cartledge and F. D. Harvey; London: Duckworth, 1985), 208–32, 224. Cf. Frederick Owen Norton, *A Lexicographical and Historical Study of ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ from the Earliest Times to the End of the Classical Period* (Historical and Linguistic Studies in Literature related to the New Testament, Second Series: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies 1.6; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908), 52–53, who suggests that Solon's law sought to legalize the existing practice of adoption by διαθήκη.

This suggestion that fourth century Athenians adopted by διαθήκαι only to circumvent the normal succession order—a suggestion that the testamentary adoption of intestate heirs (e.g., Isaeus 3, 6) calls into question³⁵—requires the synonymy of διαθήκη with εἰσποίησις (“adoption”) in the classical age.³⁶ Therein lies a problem. To be sure, the orators’ speeches do reveal a close association between the two terms. In Isaeus 10.9, e.g., the speaker appeals to the jury’s awareness that adopted children (τῶν εἰσποιήτων) could only (ἄλλως δὲ οὐκ ἔξεστιν) enter a family through wills (κατὰ διαθήκας).³⁷ Or again, the introductory hypothesis to Isaeus 2—a dispute over an *inter vivos* adoption made twenty-three years before the adopter’s death (2.14–15)—claims that the oration argues the case not of the blood relations (ὑπὲρ συγγενείας) but of the adopted son (ὑπὲρ διαθήκης).

Nevertheless, despite these indications of a close connection, the evidence ultimately does not allow for the functional equivalence of διαθήκη and εἰσποίησις. For example, Frederick Norton notes several passages (Isaeus 6.53; 9.1, 7; Demosthenes 44.65) where the orators seem to distinguish between adopting and making a will.³⁸ As Rubinstein further observes, the orators also mention at least four διαθήκαι—the wills of Conon (Lysias 19.39–40), Diodotus (Lysias 32.5–6), Pasion (Demosthenes 36; 45–46), and Demosthenes the Elder (Demosthenes 27.13–16; 28.6, 15)—that, because each testator had legitimate living sons, clearly did not involve adoption.³⁹

Admittedly, the orators themselves occasionally challenged such wills on the ground that Solon’s law allows only *sonless* men to make legitimate διαθήκαι (Demosthenes 46.15, 25; Isaeus 6.28; 10.9). With no concept of precedent and no training for juries, however, the Athenian legal system enabled orators to present potentially ambiguous laws in the way best suited to their case.⁴⁰ That at least three of these nonadoptive testaments constitute unchallenged, legal wills—the guardians appointed in the wills of Diodotus and Demosthenes the Elder were even prosecuted for not performing their testamentary

35 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 78–80.

36 Gernet, *Droit*, 122; Ludovic Beauchet, *Histoire du droit privé de la république Athénienne* (4 vols.; Paris: Chevalier-Marescq, 1897), 2:21, 3:428, 693.

37 Exhibiting the customary rhetorical excess of an orator, this claim does not even allow for *inter vivos* adoptions.

38 Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 70. E.g., Isaeus 6.53: πῶς οἶσθα Φιλοκτήμον’ ὅτι οὔτε διέθετο οὔτε υἱὸν Χαίρεστρατον ἐποίησατο;

39 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 81–86. So, too, Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 69–70.

40 Rubinstein, “Classical Athens,” 46–47. Cf. Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 84. For more general discussion, see S. C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 49–63, esp. 60–61.

obligations!—suggests that Athenian society typically did not interpret Solon's law as forbidding men with sons from making διαθήκαι.⁴¹ Rubenstein therefore proposes that Solon's law instead authorizes a sonless man to make a will *freely* (ὀπως ἄν ἐθέλῃ)—i.e., without consideration for intestate succession—an interpretation leaving other types of διαθήκαι unaddressed.⁴²

Proponents of testamentary adoption's evolutionary demise often argue that these nonadoptive διαθήκαι do not bequeath legacies so much as they provide for a testator's continuing financial obligations by establishing dowries for unmarried daughters and/or stipends for guardians of minor heirs (e.g., Demosthenes 27.4–5, 44–45).⁴³ Even if correct for these four wills,⁴⁴ this view overlooks the significance of the orators' referring to these nonadoptive wills as διαθήκαι. If a διαθήκη need not imply adoption, then we can no longer simply assume that testaments adopt heirs. Rubinstein accordingly proceeds to identify wills of five *sonless* Athenians where the assumption of adoption seems particularly problematical: the wills of Dionysodoros (Lysias 13.41); Polyuctos (Demosthenes 41.10); Mneson (Isaeus 7.6); Callias (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 8.4); and Plato (Diogenes Laertius 3.41–43).⁴⁵ More neutral cases such as the five testamentary cases in Isaeus where scholars usually assume an unmentioned adoption (Isaeus 1; 4.8; 7.9; 10; 11.89 / Demosthenes 43.4) also come into question. The bequeathing of property apart from adoption seems especially probable in Isaeus 1, where the speaker identifies multiple beneficiaries of the testament (e.g., 1.2, 35) and characterizes their shares using δωρεά (“bequest,” 1.18) rather than κληρονομία (“inheritance”).⁴⁶

41 Even in the fourth case, Apollodorus had accepted the terms of Pasion's will for roughly twenty years before challenging it in attempt to win more money (Demosthenes 36).

42 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 83–84. Cf. Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 54, 66.

43 G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, review of A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens: The Family and Property*, *The Classical Review, New Series* 20 (1970): 387–90, 390; Douglas M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 101; Lane Fox, “Aspects,” 225. See, too, Wesley E. Thompson, “Athenian Attitudes Toward Wills,” *Prudentia* 13 (1981): 13–25, 16–18, although he allows that fourth century BCE. Athenians may have bequeathed property apart from adoption in a few cases (22).

44 Conon's will leaving less than half the property to his son is the hardest to justify, but since Conon was an ex-pat living in Cyprus, it is also the easiest to dismiss. Gernet, *Droit*, 144–45, explains Conon's bequests as coming from property acquired during his own lifetime instead of from his inherited πατρῷα that he would have been required to pass to his son.

45 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 85–86.

46 Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 70. Cf. Thompson, “Attitudes,” 22 n. 29.

Alternatively, a few scholars interpret these nonadoptive wills as evidence for a limited time of transition in which adoptive and nonadoptive διαθήκαι overlapped.⁴⁷ If testaments in the fourth century could already circumvent intestate succession by bequeathing property apart from adoption, however, then the portrayal of testamentary adoption as an essentially vestigial practice cannot be sustained. Every instance of testamentary adoption becomes the result of a conscious choice that highlights the continuing significance of adoption in Athenian society.⁴⁸

With this undermining of the evolutionary model, only the lack of Hellenistic references supports the proposed demise of testamentary adoption. The resulting argument from silence proves rather underwhelming, however. As the Copenhagen Epigraphy Group notes, after the positive/neutral references to adoption in Menander's comedies at the close of the fourth century (321–305 BCE), the extant sources make no further mention of *any* Athenian adoptions until references start appearing in stone inscriptions of the second century BCE.⁴⁹ (These inscribed references continue into the second century CE.⁵⁰) Considering the dearth of sources for the interim period and the absence of any positive evidence to the contrary, the Epigraphy Group rightly concludes that adoption likely continued in Athens—as it did elsewhere—throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁵¹ They also find “no apparent reason to believe that it had changed drastically from the institution which is described in the forensic speeches of the Attic orators.”⁵² It therefore seems probable that testamentary adoption survived to Paul's day.

47 Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 44–55; David Asheri, “Laws of Inheritance, Distribution of Land and Political Constitutions in Ancient Greece,” *Historia* 12 (1963): 1–21, 8–12.

48 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 10–15, identifies the lack of data outside the fourth century BCE as a problem for *any* evolutionary model, let alone one in which both types of testament peacefully coexist in the one period from which almost all of the evidence comes.

49 Lene Rubinstein et al., “Adoption in Hellenistic and Roman Athens,” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 42 (1991): 139–51, 141.

50 Ibid., 146–48, 146–8. The inscriptions first appear when citizenship requirements for foreigners were being eased and therefore likely reflect a desire among the adopted elite to emphasize their true Athenian descent (with its incumbent privileges).

51 Ibid., 148: “the traditional view of the decline of the institution in Hellenistic and Roman periods is unfounded.” Contra Molly Broadbent, *Studies in Greek Genealogy* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 218, who concludes, “[Adoption] does not seem to be used in Hellenistic Athens (though frequent in Hellenistic times elsewhere).”

52 Rubinstein et al., “Hellenistic and Roman Athens,” 142. Contra Astrid Wentzel, “Studien über die Adoption in Griechenland,” *Hermes* 65 (1930): 167–76, who argues that the emergence in Greece (particularly in Rhodes, but also in Athens) of new adoptive formulae in inscriptions of this time period likely reflects a Roman understanding of adoption.

Bridging this chronological gap enables us to address the remaining geographical gap. Recent classical scholarship has largely debunked monolithic constructs of Greek law, raising questions about the geographical reach of testamentary adoption.⁵³ For his part, Isaeus claims that “to all other men, both to Greeks and to barbarians, this law, the one concerning adoption, appears good, and because of this *all borrow it* (χρῶνται πάντες αὐτῇ)” (2.24). Although hyperbolic, this claim surely has some grounding in a wider acceptance of this law and, accordingly, testamentary adoption. Indeed, we know at least one other fourth century πόλις practiced testamentary adoption: *Aegineticus* (Isocrates 19) concerns a case of testamentary adoption in Aegina.⁵⁴

Athens, however, remains the key πόλις for tracing testamentary adoption to Galatia. Attic culture, after all, constituted the primary basis for the Hellenism exported by Alexander the Great and his Seleucid successors throughout the southern regions of the Anatolian peninsula.⁵⁵ Galatia did become a Roman province in 25 BCE, but the Romans typically allowed subjected territories to retain their local customs and laws, especially with regard to family and inheritance matters.⁵⁶ In the Greek East, this policy meant that the Romans largely supported the Hellenistic culture already entrenched in southern Anatolia, eventually even encouraging its spread as a way of unifying the otherwise diverse peoples of provincial Galatia.⁵⁷

Derek Moore-Crispin accordingly reports that the inscriptional evidence from Greco-Roman Phrygia reveals only Greek systems of inheritance for sons.⁵⁸ With regard to adoption, W. M. Calder notes two inscriptions from

53 Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 6, illustrates the problem from the other side, cautioning against any appeals to the practice of adoption in other πόλεις for the purpose of filling the gaps in our knowledge about the Athenian version.

54 On the other hand, the laws concerning adoption and inheritance in the Dorian areas of Sparta and Gortyn exhibit significant differences from the laws in Athens. The inscribed fifth century BCE Law Code of Gortyn, for instance, makes no allowance for testaments, entitles an adopted son to inherit only half the amount of a naturally born son, and allows an adoptive father to annul a previously instituted adoption (x–x1). For the situation in Sparta, see Sima Avramović, “The Rhetra of Epitadeus and Testament in Spartan Law,” in *Symposion 2001: Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 175–86.

55 A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 3, 7. Alexander the Great was also tutored by the Athenian-trained Aristotle.

56 H. F. Jolowicz and Barry Nicholas, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law* (3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 470–71.

57 William M. Ramsay, “Studies in the Roman Province Galatia,” *JRS* 12 (1922): 147–86, 154.

58 Derek R. Moore-Crispin, “The Sources and Meaning of ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ and Related Terminology in Galatians III.15–IV.7” (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1975), 28, building on the earlier work of J. Fraser, “Inheritance by Adoption and Marriage in Phrygia, as Shown

Galatia—one third century CE, the other fourth century CE—implying the marriage of an adopted son to his adoptive sister, a common Greek practice that the Romans would have regarded as incestuous and, thus, as abhorrent.⁵⁹ Finally, a law (L. §37) in a fifth century CE Syrian-Roman lawbook specifies the circumstances under which a man with no agnatic descendants might make a testament adopting his daughter's sons.⁶⁰ This apparent vestige of testamentary adoption connects with the more robust practice in fourth century BCE Athens, a connection that stretches right through first century Greco-Roman Galatia.⁶¹

As a native of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 21:39), Paul would surely have been familiar with the Hellenistic practices of southern Asia Minor. As for the Galatians, the scholarly uncertainty over their general location—whether Paul was writing to the eponymous Gauls in the north or to the strictly provincial Galatians in the south—complicates the issue since only the areas encompassed by the South Galatian hypothesis had been thoroughly Hellenized by Paul's day.⁶² Ramsay is therefore likely correct when he argues that the detec-

in the Epitaphs of Trophimos and His Relatives," in *Studies in the History and Art of the Eastern Provinces of the Roman Empire Written for the Quartercentenary of the University by Seven of Its Graduates* (ed. William M. Ramsay; Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1906), 137–53, 149. In addition to Fraser's evidence, Moore-Crispin notes that inscriptional evidence from Iconium implies that *patria potestas* ended once a son reached the age of majority, a Greek practice that differed from the lifelong *potestas* enjoyed by fathers in Rome.

59 W. M. Calder, "Adoption and Inheritance in Galatia," *JTS* 31 (1930): 372–74, 373. Although he notes the correspondence to Greek law, Calder allows that the practice could simply represent "old Anatolian custom."

60 Ludwig Mitteis, *Reichsrecht und Volksrecht in den östlichen Provinzen des römischen Kaiserreichs. Mit Beiträgen zur Kenntniss des griechischen Rechts und der spätrömischen Rechtsentwicklung* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1891), 339–42. Karl Georg Bruns and Eduard Sachau, *Syrisch-römisches Rechtsbuch aus dem fünften Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1880) identify four versions of the lawbook: a Syriac version in London (L), a Syriac version in Paris (P), an Arabic version (Ar), and an Armenian version (Arm). Curiously, only the London version refers to adoption: "wenn er (in diesem Fall) ein Testament machen will und jene als die Söhne seines Hauses erben lassen will, so steht es in seinem Belieben" (translated by Bruns and Sachau). The parallel passage in P. §17 comes closest ("damit er die Söhne seines Hauses erben lassen"), whereas the wording of Ar. §19 ("er thue, wie er wünscht") and Arm. §13 ("er... den Kindern der Töchter die Erbschaft gibt") need not imply adoption at all.

61 So Ramsay, *Galatians*, 341.

62 Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 1:85–86. Ramsay notes that Roman efforts to Hellenize northern Galatia did not truly begin to triumph over the indigenous Celtic tribal system until the fourth century CE

tion of a Hellenistic argument in Galatians demands a south Galatian destination for the letter.⁶³ Regardless, the letter's Greek language and the countering of "Jew" with "Greek" in 3:28⁶⁴ both attest to the audience's presumed familiarity with Hellenistic culture.⁶⁵

In summary, then, the term *διαθήκη* in fourth century BCE Athens often—but not always—signified inheritance through adoption. Although older classical scholars frequently proclaimed the demise of this adoptive practice in Hellenistic Athens, recent reevaluations of the evidence suggest that it continued into the Common Era. The spread of Hellenism into Asia Minor under Alexander the Great and his Seleucid successors then likely introduced this practice into the area that became the Roman province of Galatia. This Hellenistic culture quickly became entrenched in the south, surviving and then spreading after the area's transition into the Roman Empire. Both Paul and his Galatian readers were therefore probably familiar with the Greek practice of testamentary adoption, making it a viable background for Paul's use of the word *διαθήκη*.

Of course, a *διαθήκη* did not have to signify adoption in first century Galatia; as in ancient Athens, context must provide the key. It therefore remains to show that testamentary adoption is not just a viable background but *the* background that makes Paul's argument comprehensible. To make this case, I will first consider the likely background for Paul's adoption (*υιοθεσία*) language before examining his actual *διαθήκη* references.

The Greek Background of Paul's Adoption (*υιοθεσία*) Language

In Gal 4:5, Paul claims that God sent his son "so that we might receive the adoption [*τὴν υιοθεσίαν*]." James Scott has decisively shown that *υιοθεσία* functions as a Hellenistic term for "adoption"; it never has the general sense of "sonship" that biblical scholars sometimes attribute to it in Galatians.⁶⁶ Nevertheless,

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- (Ramsay, "Studies," 150), with the major cities of northern Galatia (Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tivium) Hellenizing as early as the mid-second century CE (Ramsay, *Galatians*, 142).
- 63 Ramsay, *Galatians*, 180. For other arguments supporting the South Galatia hypothesis, see Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2.3–4; Bruce, *Galatians*, 3–18. For the North Galatia hypothesis, see Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 6–9; Martyn, *Galatians*, 15–17.
- 64 Cf. Rom 1:16; 2:9–10; 10:12.
- 65 Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 205; Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 59.
- 66 James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus* (WUNT 2 / 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 2–57. For *υιοθεσία* as "sonship," see Brown, *Galatians*, 191–92; Byrne, *Sons*, 80, 183–85; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172. Cf. NIV: "full rights of sons."

Scott also contends that the term's "Hellenistic *meaning*" need not imply "a Hellenistic *background*."⁶⁷ We must accordingly determine whether Paul's reference to adoption presupposes a Jewish, Greek, or Roman background.

Scott himself argues for a Jewish background.⁶⁸ Many scholars dismiss this possibility outright since 1) Jewish texts never explicitly mention υιοθεσία (or other terms for adoption) and 2) the Jewish practice of levirate marriage already fulfilled one of the primary purposes of adoption in the ancient world, namely, raising up heirs for an otherwise desolate household.⁶⁹ Scott, however, notes that adoption did play an important role in Jewish tradition—e.g., Pharaoh's adoption of Moses—even if that tradition did not employ the usual technical terms.⁷⁰ He then suggests that Galatians invokes this Jewish understanding, paralleling God's adoption of Israel in the Exodus (Gal 4:1–2) with his adoption of believers through Christ (4:3–7) as type and antitype based on the perceived eschatological adoption of God's people with their Messiah in the Davidic promise of 2 Sam 7:12–14.⁷¹

That Paul would expect his readers to follow such an elusive, allusive argument seems inherently implausible in a letter clearly intended for persuasion. None of the Jewish traditions Scott invokes have lexical ties to υιοθεσία, nor does the letter have any explicit references to 2 Sam 7:14, King David, or David's promised seed. Furthermore, Gal 4:1–2 can be taken as an allusion to the Exodus only with great difficulty. Such an interpretation requires the awkward reading of ἐστίν as a historical present in each verse and must assume that readers would understand the terms ἐπιτρόπους and οἰκονόμους in 4:2 as signifying the two types of enslaving state officials mentioned in Exodus, even though we have no evidence that these two terms ever designated those Egyptian

67 Scott, *Adoption*, 267.

68 See, too, James I. Cook, "The Concept of Adoption in the Theology of Paul," in *Saved by Hope: Essays in Honor of Richard C. Oudersluys* (ed. James I. Cook; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 133–44, 135–42.

69 E.g., Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption," *JBL* 88 (1969): 458–66, 459–61; James D. Hester, *Paul's Concept of Inheritance: A Contribution to the Understanding of Heilsgeschichte* (Scottish Journal of Theology: Occasional Papers 14; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968), 58–59.

70 Scott, *Adoption*, 61–117. Cf. William H. Rossell, "New Testament Adoption: Graeco-Roman or Semitic?," *JBL* 71 (1952): 233–34, who argues, based on similarities with slave adoptions at Nuzu, that Abraham must have adopted his slave Eliezer and that Paul therefore likely has this Jewish background in mind. Rossell does not explain why we should expect Paul to have read Gen 15 in light of ancient Mesopotamian Nuzu practices.

71 Scott, *Adoption*, 149.

officials.⁷² Perhaps most troubling, Paul would be alluding to the Exodus as the key paradigm of freedom in an argument otherwise downplaying the importance of the central Exodus event, namely, the giving of the law at Sinai.⁷³ Surely Paul would not make his argument depend on the gentile Galatians' ability to discern such subtle nuancing in Jewish allusions.⁷⁴

Eliminating Judaism as the primary background essentially leaves Greek and Roman cultures as viable sources for Paul's adoption metaphor. As James Walters notes, Greek and Roman adoptions shared much in the way of "motives, values, and underlying assumptions," thereby making it possible to refer generally to Greco-Roman adoption.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the two cultural systems also exhibited certain procedural and even substantive differences that render it potentially important to determine whether Paul's metaphor specifically invokes one framework or the other.

Trevor Burke's monograph on Pauline adoption metaphors identifies three main arguments for a Roman background: 1) adoption language occurs only in the Pauline letters to churches in areas of Roman rule (Galatians, Romans, Ephesians); 2) Paul was himself a Roman citizen (Acts 22:27–28) and would therefore have been familiar with Roman customs; and 3) the frequent adoptions in the Roman imperial line would have made the practice widely known

72 Ibid., 146 (for the historical present), 143–45 (for the Egyptian officials). Scott argues that Paul would have been free to designate the Egyptian taskmasters by these two titles since a decisive traditional designation had not yet emerged, but this observation cuts both ways: without an established tradition, the Galatians would have little reason to read these two terms as allusions to the Egyptian taskmasters. For similar critique, see John K. Goodrich, "As Long As the Heir Is a Child: The Rhetoric of Inheritance in Galatians 4:1–2 and P.Ryl. 2.153," *NovT* 55 (2013): 61–76, 65–66.

73 The same critique applies to Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (JSNTSup 181; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 167–73, who, accepting Scott's analysis of an Exodus theme in Gal 4:1–7, makes the case for an even larger Exodus background in Galatians by appealing to an intertextual "interpretive matrix" whereby the discussion of key Exodus-related themes (sonship, slavery, inheritance, creation, revelation, and so on) invoke this event as background. This "matrix" approach also suffers from a lack of controls: it is hard to imagine many Jewish themes for which we could not find some link to the foundational Exodus event.

74 For more extensive critique of Scott, see John K. Goodrich, "Guardians, not Taskmasters: The Cultural Resonances of Paul's Metaphor in Galatians 4:1–2," *JSNT* 32 (2010): 251–84, 255–65.

75 James C. Walters, "Paul, Adoption, and Inheritance," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 42–76, 55.

throughout the empire.⁷⁶ The Galatians, however, lived in the Greek East, where the Romans' aforementioned tendency to allow local family and inheritance laws to prevail complicates a simplistic application of these arguments from the broader external context. If anything, the external evidence would seem to favor a Greek background.⁷⁷

Turning to the internal evidence,⁷⁸ a few scholars have suggested that Paul's portrayal of this adoption in terms of a purchase (ἐξαγοράζω) and/or a "receiving back" (the prefixed form ἀπολαμβάνω) reflect the Roman procedure of *adoptio*,⁷⁹ the type of adoption that transferred a dependent person

76 Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (NSBT 22; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), 61–63. Other scholars opting for a Roman background include: Michael Peppard, "Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship," *CBQ* 73 (2011): 92–110, 95; Hansen, *Galatians*, 119; Dunn, *Galatians*, 217; Bruce, *Galatians*, 197–98; Lyall, "Adoption," 465–66; Hester, *Inheritance*, 59–61.

77 See pp. 149–51.

78 Burke, *Adopted*, 59–60, 71, dismisses the possible relevance of a Greek background based largely on the purportedly "richer" theological implications of the Roman form (cf. Lyall, "Adoption," 466), noting especially that Greek adoption, in distinction to Roman, allowed an adoptee to retain a legal relationship to the birth mother and focused primarily on property transference. The analysis of fourth century BCE διαθήκαι above (pp. 143–48) has hopefully debunked the latter claim. As for the former, while Burke rightly notes that Greek adoption left the legal relationship with the birth mother intact (Isaeus 7.25), Roman adoption hardly exhibits the "absolute nature" that he claims: according to Gaius' *Institutiones* (ca. 160 CE), Roman adoptees retained their cognate ties to their original family (3.31) and would even become an *emancipatus* of the birth father if emancipated by the adoptive father (2.137). See Harrison, *Law*, 1:93–94, and W. W. Buckland, *A Text-Book of Roman Law from Augustus to Justinian* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 121–24, 370–71, for the maintenance of these ties in Greek and Roman adoptions, respectively. Regardless, potential theological fecundity does not constitute a valid criterion for distinguishing between possible legal backgrounds.

79 For the purported relevance of ἐξαγοράζω, see Hester, *Inheritance*, 59–61; Dunn, *Galatians*, 217. For ἀπολαμβάνω, see Burke, *Adopted*, 88–89. Dunn, *Galatians*, 218, relates ἀπολαμβάνω to the "recovery" of the divine sonship originally lost through Adam. So, too, Augustine, *Exp. Gal.* 30.7; see Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 178–79. Nothing else in the text, however, supports the idea that humanity had previously enjoyed divine sonship. If ἀπολαμβάνω has a significance here beyond simple "receiving," it probably refers, as Chrysostom notes (*Hom. Gal.*, PG 61.657), to the reception of something owed (ὀφειλομένην), in this case, the promised adoption (cf. Col 3:24). For this use, see LSJ, "ἀπολαμβάνω," 205, meaning 2.

(*alieni iuris*) from one *patria potestas* to another.⁸⁰ Grounded in older traditions, *adoptio* required the legal fiction that the potential adoptee be “sold” (either to the adoptive father or to a third party) and emancipated three times in order to destroy the original father’s *potestas*, after which the adoptive father could stake his claim and “receive back” (if he had been party to the three-fold sale) the adoptee.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the similarities with Paul’s description are superficial at best. The adoptive father never made the final purchase—in some cases he even made the sale—and Paul’s use of ἀπολαμβάνω refers to “our” reception of adoption (τὴν υἱοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν), not to God’s reception of “us.”⁸²

The reference to adoption in 4:5 itself thus offers little basis for distinguishing between Greek and Roman backgrounds. We must accordingly look to the broader literary context. Two passages in particular deserve attention: the preceding appeal in 4:1–2 and the concluding inference in 4:7.

The first passage, Gal 4:1–2, appeals to the legal situation of a minor heir under guardians and stewards (ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους) until the time set by the father (ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρὸς). The plural ἐπιτρόπους fits well with a Greek context wherein fathers would often appoint multiple ἐπίτροποι in a testament (e.g., Demosthenes 27.4–6, 36.8). Nevertheless, the pairing of ἐπίτροποι with οἰκονόμοι is curious: while ἐπιτρόπος typically signifies the guardian of a minor, οἰκονόμος has no intrinsic relationship to minors or heirs.⁸³

Anton Halmel suggests that the pairing reflects the twofold division of Roman guardianship between tutors, who managed the estate of an independent (*sui iuris*) individual under the age of puberty (eventually set at fourteen for boys), and curators, who oversaw a *sui iuris* minor’s affairs from puberty

80 Romans also practiced *adrogatio*, a form of adoption in which an independent (*sui iuris*) person submitted himself (and, thus, his household) to the authority of another *patria potestas*. As noted on p. 143 above, because the effective abolition of a household in *adrogatio* required investigation and approval by Roman officials, its practice was restricted to Rome, making it unlikely to serve as the background for Paul’s argument. On the two types of Roman adoption, see Lindsay, *Adoption*, 62–78; Buckland, *Roman Law*, 121–28.

81 Buckland, *Roman Law*, 121–22.

82 For the inapplicability of the “sale” language, see Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 188–89. Burke’s further suggestion that God’s taking the initiative in Gal 4:4–5 best reflects the total authority of a Roman *paterfamilias* (Burke, *Adopted*, 88) has little merit since Greek fathers would also initiate the adoptive process.

83 For the relatively rare pairing of ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος, see Scott, *Adoption*, 136–40. He notes three instances where the pairing identifies government officials and one where it probably refers to “household supervisors.”

to the age of twenty-five.⁸⁴ As Moore-Crispin notes, however, Paul's phrasing resists this identification: a minor Roman heir typically had one tutor and one curator, whereas Paul envisions multiples of each;⁸⁵ the singular "time set by the father" (προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός, 4:2) implies that the heir emerges from his doubly subordinate position at a single time;⁸⁶ and οἰκονόμοι were usually slaves, making the term unlikely to signify a free Roman curator.⁸⁷ More significantly, Halmel understands "curator" anachronistically. Before Marcus Aurelius modified their role in the mid-second century CE,⁸⁸ curators were always appointed by a praetor to advise minors during specific business transactions.⁸⁹ A first-century Roman father would accordingly have no reason to specify a curator's tenure. Οἰκονόμοι therefore likely refers instead to those

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- 84 Anton Halmel, *Über römisches Recht im Galaterbrief: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des Paulinismus* (Essen: G. D. Bädeker, 1895), 27. Many other scholars mention these offices as potential parallels without fully endorsing them as Paul's ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι. E.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 192.
- 85 Derek R. Moore-Crispin, "Galatians 4:1–9: The Use and Abuse of Parallels," *EvQ* 60 (1989): 203–23, 207. Burton, *Galatians*, 214, suggests that the plurals are qualitative. Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 267, explains the plurals instead by suggesting that they anticipate either the plural subject ("we") or the plural στοιχεῖα in the parallel half of the analogy (4:3). A Greek context makes this explanation—which the Galatian readers would likely find awkward if they were not accustomed to the idea of multiple guardians—unnecessary. On the legal challenges created by multiple tutors, see Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 186–87.
- 86 Moore-Crispin, "Use," 207.
- 87 Moore-Crispin, "ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ," 122 n. 4. The Syrian-Roman lawbook even declares that a man who appoints his slave as a curator over his children does not need to free the slave explicitly since the appointment as curator already implies the slave's freedom. See Bruns and Sachau, *Rechtssbuch*, L. §34 parr.
- 88 [Capitolinus], *Vita Marcus Antoninus* 10.12 (in *Historia Augusta*; Magie, LCL): "As regards guardians [*curatoribus*], indeed, [Marcus Aurelius] decided that all youths might have them appointed without being obliged to show cause therefor, whereas previously they were appointed only under the Plaetorian Law, or in cases of prodigality or madness." Cf. Gaius, *Inst.* 1.197. The Plaetorian law was in place by the early second century BCE.
- 89 Roman law stipulated that a praetor could annul any transaction (*restitutio in integrum*) that he judged to have disadvantaged a minor (i.e., someone under twenty-five) through either fraud or the youngster's naïveté (cf. *Dig.* 4.4). Although intended to protect minors, this law made businessmen understandably wary of concluding financial deals with anyone under twenty-five. A minor could therefore ask the praetor to appoint a curator to advise him as a safeguard for the transacting partner. On the development of the *cura minoris*, see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 188–89; Andrew Borkowski and Paul du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law* (3d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 149–50; Buckland, *Roman Law*, 169–72.

who would administer an estate's/heir's financial affairs in subordination to the ἐπίτροποι,⁹⁰ with the high frequency of οἰκονόμος in inscriptions from Asia Minor suggesting a cultural prominence that perhaps explains its inclusion here.⁹¹ Unfortunately, this explanation of οἰκονόμος provides little help in distinguishing between Roman and Greek backgrounds.⁹²

For many scholars, the indication that a father could specify the age at which his heir would emerge from under these guardians—a practice presumably motivated by the father's desire to ensure responsible management of the inherited estate—resolves this issue of socio-legal context, pointing to a Greek background since Roman law clearly establishes fourteen as the age at which an *impubes* would emerge from his tutor's control and receive his inheritance.⁹³ Apart from Paul's letter, we have no direct evidence for this practice in Asia Minor, but it does appear in several papyri from Hellenistic Egypt (P.Ryl. 11, 153; P.Oxy. 487, 491, 495).⁹⁴ For example, in P.Oxy. 491.9–10 (126 CE), a testator

90 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 122–26. Based on the purportedly parallel description of Aristachmos as a “guardian and caretaker” (ἐπίτροπος καὶ κηδεμών) in Demosthenes 38.12, Burton, *Galatians*, 213, argues that the two terms refer to different roles of a single individual. As Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 120, points out, the plurals and the differing social statuses of the two positions—οἰκονόμοι were usually slaves, ἐπίτροποι, free—make this reading awkward. Ramsay's proposal of an intermediate legal system—“old Seleucid law”—in which ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος paralleled the Roman offices of tutor and curator (Ramsay, *Galatians*, 392–93) lacks any supporting evidence. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 166, suggests that the ἐπίτροπος governs the person while the οἰκονόμος governs the estate / property, with the two terms together indicating the comprehensive nature of the minor's subjection.

91 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 118. Cf. Goodrich, “Guardians,” 267–69 and Louis Robert, *Études anatoliennes: Recherches sur les inscriptions grecques de l'Asie Mineure* (Études orientales publiées par l'Institut Français d'Archéologie de Stamboul 5; Paris: De Boccard, 1937; repr., Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1970), 241, who notes that οἰκονόμος appears “très fréquemment” in inscriptions from Asia Minor. Betz, *Galatians*, 204, suggests that, since οἰκονόμοι often presided over other slaves, Paul includes them to reinforce his slavery theme. The twofold division could also create a structural parallel with Christ's twofold incarnational subjugation to his human mother (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός) and to the law (γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον) in 4:5.

92 On the potential compatibility of Paul's ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι language with Roman law, see Goodrich, “Guardians,” 269–74.

93 Becker, “Galater,” 61; Witherington, *Grace*, 282–83; Oepke, *Galater*, 127–28; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 267; Schlier, *Galater*, 188–90; Byrne, *Sons*, 175 n. 142. Cf. Rastoin, *Tarse*, 234–38.

94 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 129–31; cf. Moore-Crispin, “Use,” 209. Georg Bertram, “νήπιος,” *TDNT* 4:912–23, 918, also views P.Oxy. 491 as an instance of a προθεσμία τοῦ πατρός, as does Bruce, *Galatians*, 192.

extends the guardianship over his sons until they reach twenty years old, up from the normal fourteen:

And if I die while Horus and Eudaimon have not yet fulfilled their twenty years, both their brother Thonis and their maternal grandfather Harpaesis . . . will be a guardian of each of these until he fulfills twenty years.⁹⁵

Noting that Greco-Egyptian society maintained a different age of majority (fourteen) than Roman society (twenty-five⁹⁶) and that Roman evidence from Egypt contains no evidence for the extending of guardianship, Raphael Taubenschlag argues that this practice reflects local rather than Roman law.⁹⁷ To suspect that a similar practice prevailed in Hellenistic Asia Minor seems reasonable given Paul's claim.

Nevertheless, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that Roman law also allowed for extended guardianships in Paul's day.⁹⁸ While the Proculian school of jurists recognized fourteen as the age of male puberty in the middle of the first century CE, the Sabinian school traditionally determined male puberty by physical exam. Javolenus Priscus—a late first century CE Sabinian—required a youth to meet the conditions of both age and bodily development (Ulpian, *Rules*, 11.28; cf. Gaius, *Inst.* 1.196).⁹⁹ Cuq therefore argues that a father probably had some leeway in determining the age of puberty and the resulting

95 [ἐάν δέ] τελευτήσω οὐδέπω πεπληροκότων τῶν αὐτῶν Ὡρου καὶ Εὐδαίμων[ο]ς ἔτη εἴκοσι εἶναι τούτων ἑκατέρου ἄ[χ]ρι πλ[η]ρωσῇ ἔτη εἴκοσι ἐπιτροπον τόν τε ἀδελφὸν α[ὐ]τῶν Θῶν[ι]ν καὶ τὸ[ν] κατὰ μητέρα πάππον Ἀρπαῆσιν τὸν καὶ Ὡρ[ο]ν Θῶνιος. (<http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;3;491>. Cited 12 March 2015.)

96 Roman guardianship ended at puberty (age 14 for males), minority at age 25.

97 Raphael Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in Light of the Papyri 332 B.C.–640 A.D.* (New York: Herald Square, 1944), 125–26. He notes a first (second?) century CE example as well (P.Fouad 25) and cites Gal 4:1–2 as a parallel (126 n. 52). Goodrich, “As Long,” 68–75, examines the numerous parallels between Gal 4:1–2 and one of these Egyptian texts (P.Ryl. II, 153) as evidence for a Roman guardianship background. I suggest the parallels point more to a Hellenistic background, an option Goodrich does not really consider since he focuses primarily on critiquing Scott's proposal of a Jewish background.

98 Scholars assuming a Roman background for these guardians include Halmel, *Recht*, 26–28; Lagrange, *Galates*, 97–98; Williams, *Galatians*, 107; Dunn, *Galatians*, 210–12; Bruce, *Galatians*, 192; Linda L. Belleville, “‘Under Law’: Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in 3:21–4:11,” *JSNT* 26 (1986): 53–78, 61.

99 *Codex justinianus* suggests that fourteen did not become the empire-wide official age until the time of Justinian in the sixth century CE (5.60.3).

end of guardianship,¹⁰⁰ a suggestion that finds support in a law attributed to the early third century CE jurist Ulpian allowing a father freedom to specify the duration of guardianship in a testament (*Dig.* 26.2.8.2; cf. Justinian, *Inst.* 1.14.3).¹⁰¹

Furthermore, the Roman practice of *fidei commissum* enabled a testator to entrust his estate to a third party who would then be obligated to pass the property to the intended heir once that heir had reached an age designated by the testator.¹⁰² Javolenus, at least, regarded this practice as essentially equivalent to the extension of guardianship: when presented with the case of a testator's son who had died before reaching the specified age of sixteen, he argued that the original testator's estate should pass to the son's next of kin rather than remain with the fiduciary heir since, rather than specifying an uncertain date for the trust's execution, the *fidei commissum* effectively entrusted the son to the guardianship [*tutelam*] of the fiduciary heir (*Dig.* 36.1.48).

Of course, the very need for Javolenus to make this ruling argues against a common understanding of a fiduciary heir as a guardian. Taubenschlag has also proposed that the many instances of extending guardianship through *fidei commissum* in Q. Cervidius Scaevola's *Digesta* (mid-to-late second century CE) all reflect the local Greek law of the provinces.¹⁰³ Even if Taubenschlag's proposal is wrong, it still raises the distinct possibility that any such provision in first century CE Roman law represents a Hellenistic import. We can therefore conclude that, while Paul's argument in 4:1–2 could conceivably presume a Roman socio-legal background, his language fits much better with what we know of Hellenistic society.

Moving to the concluding inference in 4:7, the claim “if a son, also an heir” (εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος) further suggests a Greek background. Both Greek and Roman law acknowledged a son's “natural and necessary right to inherit”

100 Personal correspondence cited in Lagrange, *Galates*, 97–98. Cuq also notes the case in *Dig.* 36.1.48.

101 See Halmel, *Recht*, 28.

102 Cf. Saller, *Patriarchy*, 176–77.

103 Raphael Taubenschlag, “Le droit local dans les *Digesta* et *Responsa* de Cervidius Scaevola,” *BIAP* (1919–1920): 45–55, 49. His case for the Greek background of the guardianship extensions rests primarily on his assumption that Rome did not provide for such extensions. Nevertheless, he also notes that many of Scaevola's cases explicitly arise in the Greek East—including at least one from Asia Minor (*Dig.* 32.35.1)—and that at least one case appoints a woman as fiduciary heir / guardian (*Dig.* 33.1.21.2) (46, 48). In Scaevola's cases, guardianship extends until an heir reaches anywhere from fifteen (*Dig.* 36.1.80.12) to twenty-five years of age (*Dig.* 33.1.21.2).

(*Noterbrecht*) through their respective rules of intestate succession, and Paul's claim could allude casually to this basic Greco-Roman right. The policy of free testamentary disposition in Roman law, however, made circumventing this principle rather easy: a Roman father could exclude his children from the inheritance simply by expressly disinheriting them and naming another heir in his testament.¹⁰⁴ Although Greek law did have a process for disowning a son (ἀποκήρυξις),¹⁰⁵ the law required that any sons remaining in a household inherit the πατρῷα.¹⁰⁶ The Greeks even protected this right while a father still lived: whereas a Roman father had complete *potestas* over his entire family and possessions, a Greek father would often need to consult with his heir(s) before disposing of landed property, deciding who would be buried in the family tomb, or even manumitting slaves.¹⁰⁷ This protection of the right to inherit also extended to—and, in some cases, even increased for¹⁰⁸—adopted children, leading most men to delay adoption while the possibility remained of having their own children. Accordingly, to the extent that Paul invokes a strict legal principle, “if a son, also an heir” accords better with a Hellenistic environment than with a Roman environment where being a son provided no guarantee of receiving an inheritance.

In summary, although we cannot definitively eliminate the possibility of a Roman background for Paul's adoption language based on the evidence

104 Borkowski and Plessis, *Roman Law*, 235–37; Buckland, *Roman Law*, 321–24. Beginning in the late Republic, a disinherited heir could initiate a *querela* arguing that the testament disregarded the testator's duty, a claim that often required showing that the disheirson likely proceeded from a misunderstanding on the testator's part. See Borkowski and Plessis, *Roman Law*, 237–40.

105 See Harrison, *Law*, 175–77. We do not know much about the process, in part because we have no known examples from classical Athens. Harrison identifies misconduct and questionable paternity as potential grounds for ἀποκήρυξις but admits that we have no evidence of any legal restrictions on a father's ability to initiate this procedure.

106 Ibid., 1125, 130–32, 233.

107 On this power of κατοχή, see Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 152–63, and the evidence cited there.

108 In a second century CE Syrian work by Lucian of Samosata, a son whose father had disinherited him, reinstated him, and then disinherited him again argues that his second dismissal should not be allowed to stand since his reinstatement made him the equivalent of an adopted son—i.e., a son by choice—and an adopted son could not be disinherited (*Abdicatus* 12). The fifth century CE Syrian-Roman lawbook also forbids the renouncing of an adoption while allowing the renouncing of a son “with reason” (Bruns and Sachau, *Rechtsbuch*, L. §58). See Mitteis, *Reichsrecht*, 213–15. Moore-Crispin, “Use,” 216, further identifies two fourth century CE Hellenistic adoption papyri (P.Oxy. 1206 and P.Lips. 28) indicating that an adopter could not repudiate an adoptee.

examined thus far, the Roman tendency to allow local family and inheritance laws to remain intact in the (eastern) provinces, the reference to plural “guardians” and the father’s ability to specify the age at which his heir emerges from guardianship in 4:2, and the invocation of the principle of *Noterbrecht* in 4:7 all suggest a Hellenistic socio-legal background. At the very least, nothing in Paul’s discussion argues against such a background. This analysis thus leaves open the possibility that Paul has the practice of testamentary adoption in view, the demonstration of which would clearly indicate the Hellenistic nature of Paul’s adoption language. It is to this demonstration that I now turn.

Paul’s διαθήκη: An Adoptive Greek Testament

The word διαθήκη appears three times in Galatians: in 3:15, 3:17, and 4:24. Secular usage of the term in Paul’s day almost always signified a “last will and testament.”¹⁰⁹ In contrast, the LXX and, consequently, much of the related Jewish literature customarily use διαθήκη for the Hebrew concept of ברית, or “covenant.” The abundance of legal terminology surrounding the occurrence in 3:15 (κεκυρωμένην, ἄθετεῖ, ἐπιδιατάσσεται) typically directs interpreters toward the Hellenistic sense of “will”; the reference to God’s Genesis διαθήκη with Abraham in 3:17 points toward the Septuagintal meaning of “covenant.” How, then, should we understand διαθήκη in this passage?

The first clue to Paul’s meaning lies in his opening claim to speak κατὰ ἄνθρωπον in 3:15. For some scholars, this phrase itself indicates that Paul’s argument invokes the customary Hellenistic sense of διαθήκη as “testament.”¹¹⁰ Charles Cosgrove, however, has shown that κατὰ ἄνθρωπον consistently identifies “the lesser part in a stated or implied comparison,” i.e., it signifies “‘merely’ human” (cf. Rom 3:5, 7:22; 1 Cor 3:3, 9:8, 15:32; Gal 1:11).¹¹¹ Another group of interpreters therefore understands the phrase as conceding the flawed (human)

109 BDAG, “διαθήκη,” 228, meaning 1; Johannes Behm, “διαθήκη,” *TDNT* 2:124–34, 124–26. Cf. Hans Kreller, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der gräko-ägyptischen Papyrusurkunden* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1919; repr., Aalen: Scientia, 1970), 296.

110 E.g., Ramsay, *Galatians*, 350.

111 Charles H. Cosgrove, “Arguing Like a Mere Human Being: Galatians 3. 15–18 in Rhetorical Perspective,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 536–49, 542–46. The phrase therefore also does not indicate that the following argument serves as an *ad hominem* attack (contra Longenecker, *Galatians*, 127). Looking to rabbinic parallels, Carl Johan Bjerkelund, “Nach menschlicher Weise rede ich: Funktion und Sinn des paulinischen Ausdrucks,” *ST* 26 (1972): 63–100, 90–92, 99–100, argues that κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω functions as a technical term indicating the nonscriptural basis of an argument. While Cosgrove’s Greek parallels seem a more

reasoning of the ensuing argument. In other words, *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον* acknowledges that the *διαθήκαι* in 3:15 and 3:17 fundamentally differ even though the argument treats them superficially—and somewhat dubiously—as the same.¹¹² A more compelling interpretation instead understands *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον* to establish the ensuing appeal to “merely human” standards (3:15) as the basis for a lesser-to-greater argument (*a minori ad maius* / *qal vahomer*) about God’s dealings with humanity (3:17).¹¹³ This latter option prevents Paul from undermining his own argument and accords well with his qualification of the ratified *διαθήκη* in 3:15: “even though human” (*ὅμως ἀνθρώπου*).¹¹⁴

This lesser-to-greater argument technically requires only that the *διαθήκαι* in 3:15 and 17 both exhibit the inviolability that forms the basis of the comparison.¹¹⁵ As noted above, however, for Paul to switch from a testamentary *διαθήκη* in 3:15 to a covenantal *διαθήκη* in 3:17 would create a rather superficial comparison, a type of word play that would serve mainly to showcase Paul’s cleverness.¹¹⁶ The actual argument itself accordingly becomes considerably stronger if *διαθήκη* designates the same legal instrument in 3:15 and 17,¹¹⁷ a consistency that the close proximity of the two instances and the application of *κυρόω* terminology to each (*κεκυρωμένην*, 3:15; *προκεκυρωμένην* / *ἄκυροί*, 3:17) also encourage.

If Paul does indeed use *διαθήκη* consistently in 3:15 and 17, then we should be able to show either that the testamentary sense in 3:15 dominates the seemingly covenantal sense in 3:17 or that the covenantal sense in 3:17 dominates

likely background, Bjerkelund’s proposal leads to substantially the same understanding of Paul’s argument that I reach above.

112 Hays, “Galatians,” 263; Dunn, *Galatians*, 181; Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 10–13. For problems with Cosgrove’s alternative proposal that *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον* signifies Paul’s adopting a perspective with which he does not agree for the sake of refuting it (Cosgrove, “Arguing,” 546), see p. 191 n. 22 below.

113 Hahn, “Covenant,” 87–88; de Boer, *Galatians*, 219; Witherington, *Grace*, 241; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 172.

114 As Burton, *Galatians*, 178–79, notes, although *ὅμως* usually appears before the second element in a contrast, it can appear before the first (cf. 1 Cor 14:7) as the context suggests that it does in Gal 3:15. Nevertheless, the primary alternative suggestion—namely, that *ὅμως* in 3:15 be read instead as the comparative *ὁμῶς* (BDF §450.2)—would not unduly affect the suggested emphasis on *ἀνθρώπου*.

115 E.g., Murphy-O’Connor, “Irrevocable,” 113; de Boer, *Galatians*, 219.

116 The more distinct these instruments are understood to be, the more superficial the connection.

117 As Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 9–10, notes, attempts to unite the two instances by attributing to each a more neutral sense such as “disposition” (e.g., Fung, *Galatians*, 154) require a usage of *διαθήκη* that has almost no support in the literary or nonliterary sources.

the seemingly testamentary sense in 3:15. Especially given the gentile audience, the fact that the more testamentary instance comes first suggests that it takes precedence, but any solution must account for at least three other factors: typical usage patterns, wider contextual considerations, and the all-important claim of inviolability in 3:15. As I hope to show, all of these factors support a testamentary reading, thereby enabling a consistent interpretation of διαθήκη throughout the passage.

Typical Usage Patterns

I begin with typical usage patterns. Scott Hahn argues for a thoroughly covenantal reading based in part on his claim that all other instances of the term in Paul, the LXX, the NT (with the possible exception of Heb 9:16–17), and the Apostolic Fathers mean “covenant.”¹¹⁸ I will return to the evidence of the Apostolic Fathers at the end of the chapter. In short, their witness turns out to be not *quite* as monolithic as Hahn suggests—I will argue that Irenaeus constitutes an early exception—while the differing nature of the testaments in their own cultural contexts helps explain the widespread absence of testamentary readings in their writings.

With regard to the NT, however, Hahn’s claim largely begs the question. Focusing on the Pauline literature, for example, the instances in Rom 9:4 and Eph 2:12 simply list διαθήκαι as benefits belonging to Israel. If, as I will ultimately conclude, Galatians regards God’s διαθήκη with Abraham as his testamentary adoption of the patriarch, then mere association with Israel cannot suffice to establish a διαθήκη’s covenantal nature. Furthermore, although the Pauline associations of a διαθήκη with blood (1 Cor 11:25) and the removal sin (Rom 11:27) do suggest covenantal nuances, these instances both appear in citations—of Christian tradition and scripture, respectively—where the surrounding argument makes no explicit appeal to the nature of the referenced διαθήκαι. The same holds true for the only other instances of διαθήκη in Paul: 2 Cor 3:6 and 14, which allude to Jer 31:31–34. To prejudge the meaning of διαθήκη in its integral role in Galatians based on these rather perfunctory appearances seems methodologically suspect.

In Galatians, the terminology surrounding διαθήκη points overwhelmingly to a testamentary reading. Words typically associated with covenants—“oath,” “blood,” etc.—do not appear;¹¹⁹ words typically associated with testaments

118 Hahn, “Covenant,” 81; Hahn, *Kinship*, 258. Other scholars who argue for a covenantal reading include John J. Hughes, “Hebrews 9:15ff and Galatians 3:15ff: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure,” *NovT* 21 (1979): 27–96, 66–91; Burton, *Galatians*, 496–505.

119 Murphy-O’Connor, “Irrevocable,” 113.

appear throughout the passage. The legal terminology in 3:15 provides a helpful example. Hahn discounts its testamentary value by arguing 1) that *κυρώω*, *ἀθετέω*, and *διατάσσω* are not exclusively legal terms and 2) that even if Paul does apply these terms legally, such terminology would also be appropriate for discussing a legal covenant.¹²⁰ These caveats notwithstanding, the rare term *ἐπιδιατάσσομαι*—a *hapax* in extant Greek documents that predate the NT¹²¹—still points toward a testamentary reading. In its Galatians context, the deponent compound verb makes sense only if it builds on the similarly deponent secondary meaning of *διατάσσομαι* as “make testamentary dispositions,”¹²² a meaning especially prevalent in southern Anatolia.¹²³ Furthermore, the related terms *ἐπιδιαθήκη* (“additional will, codicil”) and *ἐπιδιατίθεμαι* (“make a later will”) suggest that *ἐπί* indicates “additional” in such compounds.¹²⁴ Hence, BAGD defines *ἐπιδιατάσσομαι* as “to add a codicil to a will.”¹²⁵ Hahn objects to this definition as question-begging,¹²⁶ but it arises as the natural implication of the word’s lexical components. With no other known instances of the word to counter this etymological implication, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul opts for—perhaps even coins—this particular word instead of a more conventional term for “supplement” (cf. *προστίθημι* in 3:19) because of its testamentary connotations.

The suggestion in 3:18 that this *διαθήκη* determines who receives “the inheritance” (ἡ κληρονομία) provides an even stronger indication of a testamentary reading.¹²⁷ Testaments primarily determine who inherits from a testator; covenants, in contrast, have no intrinsic connection with inheritance. Of course, since the LXX often refers to the land promised to the patriarchs as Israel’s “inheritance” (e.g., Deut 12:9–10), the linking of the inheritance in 3:18

120 Hahn, *Kinship*, 257–58; Hahn, “Covenant,” 86–87. Cf. Steven M. Baugh, “Galatians 3:20 and the Covenant of Redemption,” *WTJ* 66 (2004): 49–70, 60, who suggests that Paul uses the testamentary language of ratification in 3:17 to “establish a link” between the clearly covenantal Abrahamic *διαθήκη* and the testamentary principle mentioned in 3:15.

121 All 26 other instances in TLG occur in later Christian writers. LSJ lists only Gal 3:15 (“ἐπιδιατάσσομαι,” 630).

122 LSJ, “διατάσσω,” 414, meaning II.

123 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 79.

124 Ibid., 78–79. See LSJ, “ἐπιδιαθήκη,” 630; “ἐπιδιατίθεμαι,” 630, meaning II.

125 BAGD, “ἐπιδιατίθημι,” 292. BDAG more neutrally defines it as “to add to, with the implication of supplementary or modifying instructions” but still suggests that, as a legal technical term, it signifies “add a codicil to a will” (“ἐπιδιατάσσομαι,” 370). Cf. LSJ, “ἐπιδιατίθημι,” 630, meaning II: “make additions to a will.”

126 Hahn, “Covenant,” 87 n. 44. He prefers the more neutral definition “to add to.”

127 Ramsay, *Galatians*, 350.

with the Abrahamic διαθήκη in 3:17 could indicate that ἡ κληρονομία is simply a Septuagintalism. Such reliance on the LXX, however, could not explain Paul's subsequent focus on identifying the legitimate "heirs" (κληρονόμοι, 3:29; κληρονόμος, 4:7) of this inheritance. Galatians 4:1–2 even appeals to the standard (human) procedures for handling a minor heir as an explanatory parallel for God's actions (cf. κατὰ ἄνθρωπον in 3:15). These factors show that Paul conceives of ἡ κληρονομία in 3:18 as an actual inheritance, a conclusion that in turn suggests understanding διαθήκη as "testament."

Wider Contextual Considerations

The wider context of 3:15–4:11 also supports a testamentary interpretation. Hahn points to the Jewish/Abrahamic context of the arguments that both precede (3:6–14) and follow (3:17–18) the claim in 3:15, suggesting that a sudden appeal to Greco-Roman law would constitute a jarring anomaly.¹²⁸ To the contrary, Gal 3:15 begins a section (3:15–4:11) characterized throughout by appeals to a Hellenistic—or at least Greco-Roman—socio-legal background: a παιδαγωγός in 3:24–25; a minor heir under guardians in 4:1–2; υἱοθεσία in 4:5. The indications of a testamentary reading even go beyond a simple similarity in socio-legal background. As Moore-Crispin notes, Paul's appeal in 4:1–2 presupposes a testamentary context: a father would use a will to appoint and limit the duration of any guardians for a minor heir.¹²⁹

The wider context also suggests that 3:15 and 17 presume the adoptive nature of their διαθήκαι, an observation that fits well with the Hellenistic practice of adoptive testaments. Paul, of course, plainly invokes adoption in 4:5. Although this verse does not explicitly tie the adoption to the διαθήκη, the otherwise awkward introduction of divine sonship in 3:26 helps establish the connection, a point that requires elaboration.

As proof for his statement in 3:25 that Jewish Christians are no longer under the law, Paul claims in 3:26 that "all of you are sons of God through faith, in Christ Jesus." Franz Mußner understandably expresses surprise that Paul would characterize the recipients as sons *of God* rather than of Abraham.¹³⁰ After all,

¹²⁸ Hahn, *Kinship*, 258; Hahn, "Covenant," 81.

¹²⁹ Moore-Crispin, "ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ," 15–16, 108–13.

¹³⁰ Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 261. Cf. Byrne, *Sons*, 165–66. Lyons, *Galatians*, 227, wonders why 3:26–29 introduces a series of intermediate steps—beginning with becoming God's children—to reach "the same affirmation" of Abrahamic descent that Paul essentially established in 3:7, a problem that arises from conflating Abraham's "sons" (3:7) with his "seed" (3:29).

not only has Paul focused solely on *Abrahamic* descent since 3:6,¹³¹ but the logic of the larger argument in 3:23–26 also requires showing that Abraham’s descendants—not God’s—now include law-free gentiles. That is to say, it is the gentiles’ Christ-based status as Abrahamic seed (3:29) that demonstrates the irrelevance of law observance to such status. The logical and rhetorical emphasis in 3:26 therefore falls on the final three words of the claim: all of Paul’s Galatian readers are “in Christ Jesus.”¹³² That the ensuing discussion of “putting on Christ” in 3:27–29 seeks to prove exactly this aspect of the claim and that Paul drops “sons of God” from the parallel conclusion in 3:28 (“all of you are one in Christ Jesus”) help confirm this analysis.

Why does Paul introduce the term “sons of God” in 3:26 if it serves no purpose in the immediate argument of 3:23–29? J. Louis Martyn suggests that it appears because Paul is citing a baptismal formula.¹³³ Even if the phrase originates in a standard formula, however, the further development of the theme in 4:1–7—where the Son of God comes to enable the adoption of others into God’s family—indicates that it serves an integral role in Paul’s argument. Martyn accordingly proposes that Paul highlights his readers’ status as “sons of God” in order to downgrade the significance of Abrahamic descent,¹³⁴ but the identification of the readers as Abrahamic seed in 3:29 renders such downgrading unnecessary.

A second proposal identifies “sons of God” as indicating the full/mature sonship that stands in contrast to a minor’s position under a *παιδαγωγός*.¹³⁵ The “of God” thus becomes extraneous. As H. A. W. Meyer notes, however, “of God” already defines this sonship; “therefore *to supply* the defining idea is quite unwarrantable.”¹³⁶ In other words, the significance of this sonship lies not in the unmentioned stage of development that it purportedly represents but in the one to whom it expressly relates the Galatians.

After reviewing the concept of divine sonship in intertestamental Jewish literature, Brendan Byrne concludes that “sons of God”—a “standard epithet” whose significance Paul simply assumes in 3:26—likely signifies “the members

131 References to Jesus as God’s Son do appear in 1:16 and 2:20.

132 So Kwon, *Eschatology*, 87–88. Contra Tolmie, *Persuading*, 143, who claims that “in terms of content, the emphasis falls on the notion ‘sonship of God by faith.’”

133 Martyn, *Galatians*, 375.

134 *Ibid.*, 374–75.

135 Tolmie, *Persuading*, 142; Fung, *Galatians*, 170–71; Lagrange, *Galates*, 91.

136 Meyer, “Galatians,” 155.

of the righteous Israel, destined to inherit the eschatological blessing.”¹³⁷ This interpretation has found favor among recent interpreters.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, at least four factors argue against this effective synonymy of Abrahamic and divine descent: 1) the needless and potentially disruptive switch from Abrahamic to divine sonship in 3:26; 2) the gentile Galatians’ likely unfamiliarity with the Jewish literature establishing the exclusivity of Israel’s claim to divine sonship; 3) the need for even Jewish sons of Abraham (“we”) to receive divine adoption in 4:5–6; and 4) the resulting redundancy of the argument for divine sonship in 4:1–7.

The reference to divine sonship in 3:26 therefore makes more sense if it articulates a distinct concept that Paul has already implicitly introduced, can consequently assume in 3:26, and can then develop in 4:1–7. Understanding the Abrahamic διαθήκη in 3:15–18 as God’s testamentary adoption of the patriarch provides just such an introduction.¹³⁹ It also, incidentally, accounts for the article before υιοθεσία in 4:5. As Byrne notes, the article

shows that Paul is referring to something mentioned before—or at least something presumed to be already present in his readers’ consciousness.... Υιοθεσία seems to be something presupposed all along—something that has been running under the surface of the argument hitherto, only now making an appearance but, in fact, requiring no explanation.¹⁴⁰

Byrne relates the article somewhat loosely to “the sonship of Christ”;¹⁴¹ it functions more intuitively as a pointer back to the adoption introduced with Abraham’s διαθήκη.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Byrne, *Sons*, 173. His summary of the theme in intertestamental literature appears on pp. 62–63.

¹³⁸ Cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 250; Hays, “Galatians,” 271; Witherington, *Grace*, 269–70; Hansen, *Galatians*, 111; Dunn, *Galatians*, 202; Matera, *Galatians*, 144–45; Betz, *Galatians*, 185–86.

¹³⁹ So also Rastoin, *Tarse*, 183. Although he does not interpret the διαθήκη in terms of adoption, de Boer similarly connects the “sons of God” language to the earlier portrayal of God as a testator (*Galatians*, 245 n. 366).

¹⁴⁰ Byrne, *Sons*, 183.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 220, who suggests that the article points back to a mature son’s time of release from under guardians in 4:1–2, a transition that has nothing to do with adoption.

¹⁴² Of the other four occurrences in the Pauline literature (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph 1:5), υιοθεσία appears with the article only in Rom 9:4, where it initiates a list of Israelite privileges, all of which are similarly articular. The anarthrous nature of the other references—

The letter's other reference to διαθήκαι in the allegory of 4:21–5:1 provides a final contextual indication that Paul has testamentary adoption in mind. In this allegory, Paul identifies the Jerusalem above as “our mother” based on the portrayal of Jerusalem in Isa 54:1 as a barren woman who, despite not bearing any children, nevertheless has numerous offspring (Gal 4:26–27). As Chapter 7 will argue in considerably more detail, adoption explains this seeming paradox and thus seems to ground Paul's identification of the heavenly Jerusalem with the (adoptive) Abrahamic διαθήκη rather than the (nonadoptive) Sinaitic διαθήκη.

The Claim of Inviolability

Audience, relative position, typical usage patterns, and wider contextual considerations thus all strongly suggest a testamentary reading. Nevertheless, the inviolability that Paul attributes to the διαθήκη in 3:15 has always seemed to favor a covenantal reading. The problem is that ancient testators could amend, annul, or otherwise change their wills at any time.¹⁴³ In fact, this revocability provided testamentary adoption with its primary advantage over the practically irrevocable *inter vivos* adoption.¹⁴⁴ Childless Greek men could write wills before going to war (Isaeus 9.15) or traveling abroad (Isaeus 11.8) as a kind of insurance policy. If they died while abroad, they had provided for the continuance of their οἶκος; if they returned safely, they could simply tear up the will and begin a family.¹⁴⁵ Paul's claim that “no one sets aside or supplements” a ratified διαθήκη (3:15) would therefore seem inaccurate for a testament.

Scholars typically account for the διαθήκη's inviolability in one of four ways. One approach argues for a testamentary meaning of διαθήκη by claiming that the premise in 3:15 excludes the testator: Paul actually means that “no one

especially in the similar phrases of Rom 8:15 (“you received a spirit of adoption,” ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας) and 8:23 (“awaiting adoption,” υἱοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι)—and the previous inference of adoption in Galatians thus make it likely that the article in Gal 4:5 is anaphoric and not simply Paul's typical way of rendering this abstract noun.

143 The suggestion of Schlier, *Galater*, 144, that οὐδείς refers to the testator himself thus cannot be correct.

144 Athenian law required that an adopted son inherit equally with any sons subsequently born (Isaeus 6.63), suggesting that, unlike in the Law Code of Gortyn (x1), an Athenian father could not annul a previously enacted adoption. See p. 160 n. 108 above for evidence suggesting that an adopted son stood in an even stronger position than a naturally born son in this regard.

145 For a διαθήκη made before war and then (apparently) revoked upon a safe return, see Isaeus 8.9, 14–15.

[except the testator]" can modify a ratified διαθήκη.¹⁴⁶ Such explanations fail to give Paul's use of οὐδεὶς its due and create problems for the interpretation of 3:17–20, where God (the presumed testator) adds the law without thereby being able to modify the previously ratified διαθήκη.¹⁴⁷

A second approach tries to identify other legal agreements—such as the Roman *fidei commissum*¹⁴⁸ or the Jewish מתנת בריא (a deed of gift in which the donor retains usufruct until death)¹⁴⁹—that fit Paul's description of inviolability. This approach founders because these alternative agreements were not actually known as διαθήκαι.¹⁵⁰ S. Llewelyn and Timothy Lim both seek to overcome this objection by appealing to a particular type of בריא מתנת in which the beneficiary receives half of the gift immediately and, similarly to a διαθήκη, the remaining half at the benefactor's death. Since one such document (P.Yadin 19 [128 CE]) employs the cognate terms διέθετο ("willed") and διεθετῶν ("testator"), they conclude that these deeds could reasonably be called irrevocable διαθήκαι.¹⁵¹ Lim finds further evidence for this conclusion in the likely presence of the word διαθήκη in the "badly mutilated" inner summary of P.Yadin 19.¹⁵²

The Tannaim, however, regard דייתיקי (i.e., διαθήκη transliterated) as the *revocable* counterpart to the irrevocable מתנה,¹⁵³ a distinction that reflects the

146 E.g., Moore-Crispin, "ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ," 72; Hays, "Galatians," 263; Martyn, *Galatians*, 156; Oepke, *Galater*, 112; Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (3d ed.; KNT 9; Leipzig: Deichert, 1922), 167. Cf. Phil 2:20.

147 Accordingly, proponents of this reading usually argue that the passive προσετέθη and reference to the angels in 3:19 seek to differentiate God from the law (e.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 219; Martyn, *Galatians*, 338, 357), a problematical argument at best (see pp. 194–95).

148 Taylor, "Function," 58–76.

149 E. Bammel, "Gottes ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ (Gal III. 15–17) und das jüdische Rechtsdenken," *NTS* 6 (1959–1960): 313–19.

150 Hahn, *Kinship*, 259; Hahn, "Covenant," 82; Witherington, *Grace*, 242–43.

151 S. R. Llewelyn, "The Revocation of Wills and Gal 3.15," in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, Volume 6: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980–81* (Marrickville, NSW: Macquarie University Ancient History Document Research Centre, 1992), 41–47, 46–47; Timothy H. Lim, "The Legal Nature of Papyrus Yadin 19 and Galatians 3:15," in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini, Vol. 2: Judaism and Christianity in the Beginning* (eds. Alan J. Avery-Peck, et al.; JSJS 85; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 361–76, 365–69. Cf. Esler, *Galatians*, 192. Llewelyn also notes R. Simeon b. Gamaliel's claim in *t. B. Bat.* 9:14 that διεθέμην signifies "a gift." In contrast, Murphy-O'Connor, "Irrevocable," 109, argues that the components of such deeds remain separate: they contain an irrevocable gift and a (revocable) will.

152 Lim, "Legal," 368.

153 E.g., *y. Sanh.* 2:6; *y. Ber.* 5:2; *b. B. Bat.* 135b. Highlighting the rabbinic principle that a testator must present his דייתיקי to and have it accepted by the beneficiary (or the

origin of these two instruments in the two types of dispositions in contemplation of death practiced in Ptolemaic Egypt: the revocable Hellenistic διαθήκη and the irrevocable indigenous μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν gift.¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, even Lim concedes that the appearance of διαθήκη in P. Yadin 19 would either signify “disposition” generally—a use of the word that, while lexically apt, has little support in the contemporary sources¹⁵⁵—or indicate a scribal misunderstanding of the deed.¹⁵⁶ Either scenario undermines the suggestion that this type of deed was commonly known as a διαθήκη. Paul therefore seems unlikely to have expected the gentile Galatians to recognize this peculiarly Jewish deed as his referent.¹⁵⁷

Hahn champions a third approach that identifies the διαθήκη in 3:15 with the Jewish “covenant.” As he notes, this interpretation succeeds at the two points where the other interpretations fail: it identifies the διαθήκη with a legal agreement that was both 1) known by the name of διαθήκη and 2) inviolable even by its author.¹⁵⁸ The problem here lies in the otherwise strong contextual indications that Paul employs διαθήκη in its testamentary sense.

beneficiary’s representatives) for the דייתיקי to be valid (190), Walter Selb, “Διαθήκη im Neuen Testament: Randbemerkungen eines Juristen zu einem Theologenstreit,” *JJS* 25 (1974): 183–96, argues that this bilateral form makes such a דייתיקי—and, hence, Paul’s διαθήκη—*unilaterally* irrevocable (192). Since Paul neither specifies “unilaterally” nor indicates that he has a peculiarly Jewish διαθήκη in mind—Hellenistic διαθήκαι required no such acceptance—the gentile Galatians would have little foreseeable chance of comprehending this argument.

154 Reuven Yaron, *Gifts in Contemplation of Death in Jewish and Roman Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 46–47. Eventually, the Tannaim restricted the revocable דייתיקי to the seriously ill and the irrevocable מתנה to the healthy, hence, מתנת בריא (“gift of the hale”) (e.g., *t. B. Bat.* 8:9). Adrian Schenker, “Le contrat successoral en droit gréco-égyptien et la διαθήκη dans la Septante,” *ZABR* 6 (2000): 175–85, 184–85, followed by Bernard S. Jackson, “Why the Name New Testament?,” *Melilah: Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (2012): 50–100, 64–65, hypothesizes that, based on its use in the LXX for ברית, the term διαθήκη once encompassed irrevocable μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν gifts in Ptolemaic Egypt. He notes, however, that we have no direct evidence for this usage.

155 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 9–10; Behm, *TDNT*, 125–26.

156 Lim, “Legal,” 375.

157 Recognizing the incongruity of appealing to a Jewish instrument in a discussion with gentiles, Betz, *Galatians*, 155, suggests that Paul refers to Greek instruments equivalent to the Jewish מתנת בריא. As Llewelyn, “Revocation,” 45, observes, however, since a מתנת בריא was a deed of gift instead of a testament, Greek equivalents (such as the Egyptian μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν gift) would also not be known as διαθήκαι.

158 Hahn, *Kinship*, 259–60; Hahn, “Covenant,” 83.

We thus come to the fourth approach, which suggests that Paul uses διαθήκη in the sense of Hellenistic testamentary adoption. The foremost proponent of this reading is William Ramsay. Unfortunately, he essentially establishes the inviolability of a διαθήκη by conflating testamentary adoption with irrevocable *inter vivos* adoption: “the adoption was the Will-making.”¹⁵⁹ He also mistakenly concludes that valid Hellenistic testaments had to be registered in a “Record Office.”¹⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, few scholars have found this proposal compelling.

One scholar who does affirm Ramsay’s focus on testamentary adoption is Jerome Murphy-O’Connor.¹⁶¹ For Murphy-O’Connor, however, all Hellenistic adoptions were revocable.¹⁶² He can accordingly establish the inviolability of a διαθήκη only by reading κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω in Gal 3:15 as indicating an appeal to popular consensus rather than strict legality.¹⁶³ Pointing to practical considerations of morality and property, Murphy-O’Connor then suggests that adoptive testaments were commonly *held* to be irrevocable even if revocation was technically possible. He grounds the moral argument in *Abdicatus*, a second century CE Syrian work by Lucian of Samosata wherein a son who had been disinherited and reinstated argues that he cannot be disinherited a second time since his reinstatement essentially made him equivalent to an adopted son, i.e., a son by choice (*Abdic.* 12). As this text suggests, the very act of choosing an adult for adoption testifies to the adoptee’s character and undercuts any moral justification for a subsequent revocation.¹⁶⁴ With regard to property, Murphy-O’Connor notes that adoptees became full heirs; the rights that Greek heirs possessed over their inheritance even during their father’s lifetime would then make it difficult to revoke an adoption.¹⁶⁵

If Ramsay goes astray by treating the adoption as the will making, Murphy-O’Connor goes astray by effectively treating the will making as the adoption. While he rightly notes societal elements that support the irrevocability of Hellenistic adoptions, he errs in applying these elements to adoptive

159 Ramsay, *Galatians*, 351.

160 Ibid., 354–55. As William Wyse, *ΙΣΑΙΟΣ: The Speeches of Isaeus with Critical and Explanatory Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 194, observes, such registrations in Ptolemaic Egypt reflect “Egyptian succession duty” and do not indicate a wider Hellenistic practice. Cf. Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 62: “There is no evidence or trace of registration of Greek wills in the classic period.”

161 Followed by Rastoin, *Tarse*, 180–85; Jean-Pierre Lémonon, *L’épître aux Galates* (Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament 9; Paris: Cerf, 2008), 134–35.

162 Murphy-O’Connor, “Irrevocable,” 102.

163 Ibid., 106–8.

164 Ibid., 103–4.

165 Ibid., 104. See p. 160 above.

testaments while the testator still lived, i.e., before the adoption had actually taken place.¹⁶⁶ Potential adoptees named in a testament, e.g., had no rights over the testator's inheritance. Indeed, they might not even be aware that they had been named as heirs in an adoptive testament. Moreover, as noted above, the ability to revoke a testament provided the main advantage of testamentary adoption over the practically irrevocable *inter vivos* adoption, a distinction Murphy-O'Connor largely overlooks. Awareness of this difference, however, actually points the way forward to a much stronger case for the inviolability of an adoptive testament.

The key question is at what point a διαθήκη becomes "ratified" or "confirmed" (κεκυρωμένην). Noting that κυρώ "describes the legal acceptance or validation which must be given to a proposed transaction for it to be put into effect" and appealing to the purportedly parallel phrase ἡ διαθήκη κυρία with which Greco-Egyptian testators often concluded and validated their wills (e.g., P.Oxy. 491.12), Moore-Crispin argues that Paul's κεκυρωμένην "must have reference to a legal validation, effective from the time that the will is drawn up, which ensures that it is executable at the testator's decease."¹⁶⁷ A testator, however, could still amend or annul such a will. Accordingly, for Paul's claim in 3:15 to describe a testament accurately, the "validation" must refer to a legal act that occurred once a testator could no longer modify his testament. It must have occurred, that is, after a testator's death.

Once again, classical Athenian law provides a potentially illuminating parallel/antecedent. In ancient Athens, legitimate sons—whether biological or adopted *inter vivos*—had the right to take possession of their inherited patrimony immediately upon their father's death without any legal formalities. If, however, an estate had no legitimate surviving sons, then any potential heirs—whether through testament or intestacy—had to have their claim ratified by the courts through an ἐπιδικασία (or, for multiple opposing claimants, a διαδικασία) before possessing their inheritance.¹⁶⁸ The ratification of a will thus occurred *after* a testator's death, just as Paul's argument requires.

Indeed, the very revocability of an adoptive testament requires some sort of postmortem validation. As Frederick Norton notes,

166 E.g., *ibid.*, 108. Significantly, he builds his case around the possibility of "[renouncing] an adoption" (103), but renouncing an adoption is very different from revoking an adoptive testament.

167 Moore-Crispin, "ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ," 68–69. As he notes (67), the inherent sense of κυρώ as "validate" precludes understanding κυρώ as the execution of the will (contra Burton, *Galatians*, 179) or the death of the testator (contra Zahn, *Galater*, 167; Augustine, *Exp. Gal.* 29.2 [Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary*, 162–63]).

168 See Harrison, *Law*, 1:156–62; Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 40.

This “testamentary adoption” was not identical with adoption *inter vivos*, because the εἰσποίησις was not legally complete. . . . until the public ceremonies were gone through with after [the testator’s] death. . . . It was not a complete legal contract like adoption *inter vivos* but rather like an instrument drawn up and signed by one party and waiting for the signature of the other. The heir did not become legally a party to it until he had publicly signified his agreement by having himself enrolled in the phratry and the deme.¹⁶⁹

Officials in Galatia surely had some similar legal mechanism for finalizing an adoption. Furthermore, once a testamentary heir had been ratified by the ἐπίδικασία and had completed the adoption process, he could then—like any other legitimate son—block subsequent attempts to open a new ἐπίδικασία simply by making a solemn declaration (διαμαρτυρία) that the estate had a surviving son (e.g., Isaeus 5.16).¹⁷⁰ In other words, a ratified adoptive διαθήκη could not be “set aside” or “supplemented.”

This inviolability of a ratified διαθήκη reflects the general Athenian view of court decisions. As S. C. Todd notes, “In principle, the verdict of the court was final and there could be no appeal. It was an axiom of democratic political theory that this should be so: the verdict of the court was the opinion of the *polis*, and to acknowledge the possibility of higher authority was to repudiate democracy.”¹⁷¹ Paul’s claim thus accords with the theoretical ideal, even if, as Todd goes on to note, “In practice . . . there were several ways of reopening [a court] case.”¹⁷² For example, in cases of testamentary adoption, other claimants could charge an adopted heir’s witnesses with bearing false testimony (δίκη ψευδομαρτυρίων) in hopes of having the original verdict overturned.¹⁷³

Adoption itself similarly seems to have been largely irrevocable. In addition to the morality and property considerations noted above by Murphy-O’Connor, Athenian law required that an adopted son inherit equally with any subsequently born sons (Isaeus 6.63), suggesting that a father could not simply annul a previously enacted adoption. Here again, however, exceptions to the inviolability did exist. Technically, an Athenian adoptee could return

169 Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 53. Cf. Lindsay, *Adoption*, 48, 83, who notes that this need for ratification after a testator’s death differentiated Greek testamentary adoption from its Roman counterpart.

170 See Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 45–55, esp. 54. Other intestate heirs could never make such a claim, hence the possibility of multiple court hearings in inheritance cases.

171 Todd, *Shape*, 145.

172 Ibid.

173 Harrison, *Law*, 1156–57.

to the family of origin after providing the adoptive household with a legitimate son (Demosthenes 44.64; cf. Isaeus 6.44, 9.33, 10.11).¹⁷⁴ We also know of *one* case where an adoption was revoked: Demosthenes reports that a certain Polyuctus, after quarrelling with his adopted son-in-law Leocrates, reclaimed his daughter and married her to another man. Leocrates then won a settlement in court, after which both parties released the other from further obligation (41.3–5).¹⁷⁵

Such exceptions to the ideal, however, occur with purportedly inviolable covenants as well.¹⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 24:1–4, e.g., allows divorce to dissolve a sacred marriage covenant, while the very need for a “new covenant” in Jer 31:31–32 suggests that the “old covenant” has in some way been broken / set aside. Objections that the possibility of divorce was built into the nature of the marriage covenant or that the old covenant was not broken without suffering due penalties apply equally well to the law allowing an adoptee’s return and the singular case of Polyuctos. In sum, then, unlike the easily revocable testaments of living testators, ratified adoptive testaments stand alongside covenants as legal instruments that aspire to inviolability and that thus form an appropriate analog for understanding the superior inviolability of a divine διαθήκη.

The assumption that Paul understands διαθήκη in Gal 3:15 as an instrument of adoption thus helps resolve the chief objection to a Hellenistic reading, namely, that ratified Greek testaments were not inviolable. Adoption also helps resolve another potential objection, namely, that although a testament attains inviolability and comes into effect only with the testator’s death, God (the “testator” in 3:17) does not die.¹⁷⁷ Whereas inheriting might require a testator’s death, being adopted does not: the ratification of a testamentary adoption before the testator’s death simply makes the (irrevocable) adoption *inter vivos*. Furthermore, under Greek law, a father could allow his heirs to start taking ownership of their inheritance even before his death,¹⁷⁸ a possibility that the absolute concept of *patria potestas* did not allow in Roman society.

174 The law was probably intended to cover cases where an adoptee’s original household was in danger of becoming extinct. While such returns could legitimately be understood as setting aside the original adoption, the requirement of leaving a naturally born son in the adoptive household ensures a standing testimony to the validity of the original adoption remains (Demosthenes 44.64).

175 See Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 55–56. As she notes, the account provides too few details to establish any general principles.

176 So Murphy-O’Connor, “Irrevocable,” 113; Lyons, *Galatians*, 202, 205–6.

177 Noted, e.g., by Hays, “Galatians,” 263; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 173.

178 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 152–63.

Despite these interpretive advantages, Moore-Crispin nevertheless argues that Paul cannot have testamentary adoption in view: Christ—i.e., the “heir to the promise of the διαθήκη” (3:16)—has no need for divine adoption since he is already God’s true son (4:5).¹⁷⁹ Paul, however, carefully refrains from applying the διαθήκη language to Abraham’s seed.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the connection between the διαθήκη principle in 3:15 and its application in 3:16 would have been clearer had the latter verse explicitly invoked the Abrahamic διαθήκη. Galatians 3:16 instead refers simply to “the promises” (αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι), and the seed appears nowhere in the explicit discussion of the διαθήκη in 3:17–18. This pattern suggests that, although the διαθήκη has promissory implications for Abraham’s seed, these implications accrue to the seed by virtue of natural descent, just as any son born to an adoptee becomes an heir of the adopting house by birth. In fact, as I will now argue, it is precisely Jesus’ status as a naturally born son of God that differentiates him from Abraham’s other sons and identifies him as the sole seed.¹⁸¹

Testamentary Adoption and the Identification of Christ as Abraham’s Sole Seed

How does understanding God’s διαθήκη with Abraham as his testamentary adoption of the patriarch lead to the conclusion that Christ constitutes Abraham’s sole seed? In short, it suggests that Abraham shares in the divine inheritance by virtue of his divine adoption. The Abrahamic seed to whom God also promises a share in this inheritance must accordingly be a son of both Abraham and God. Christ’s acknowledged status as both the Son of God (Gal 4:4) and a son of Abraham (i.e., a Jew) thus identifies him as the unique promised seed.¹⁸²

While audience members relatively unfamiliar with the Abraham story might accept Paul’s reasoning in this simplified form, the agitators could easily protest that Genesis names Isaac—not some unidentified future figure—as Abraham’s promised seed. Indeed, Paul himself subsequently refers to Isaac

179 Ibid., 189–90 n. 4. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 502.

180 Contra Hahn, *Kinship*, 261.

181 Cf. Rastoin, *Tarse*, 185.

182 Of course, Jesus does not come to his status as son of both God and Abraham through the normal human route of being born to the postadoption patriarch. Instead, he emerges through the subsequent divine impregnation of a woman descended from Abraham’s original household. On the importance of the virgin birth for Paul’s argument, see pp. 241–43.

as Abraham's son born through a promise (4:23; cf. 4:28). We must therefore investigate how Paul interprets the biblical account of Abraham.

Galatians 3:16—"[It speaks] as concerning one, 'And to your seed'"—clearly functions as an exegetical comment, but to what passage in particular does Paul refer? The phrase καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου is spoken to Abraham in Gen 13:15 and 17:8.¹⁸³ Of these two instances, God's expressed intention in Gen 17:7 to establish a διαθήκη with Abraham and his seed better fits the context in Galatians and suggests Gen 17:8 as Paul's source.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Gen 17 contains many themes with potential relevance for the situation in Galatia: the requirement of circumcision for all males in Abraham's household (17:9–12), the promise that Sarah will bear a son (17:15–16), and a differentiation between Ishmael and the promised Isaac (17:18–21; cf. Gal 4:21–5:1). Since any rebuttals of Paul's argument would likely appeal to this chapter, it makes sense for him to address the promise in Gen 17.

Although Gen 17 clearly portrays Abraham's seed as 1) a plurality 2) who will share in Abraham's διαθήκη with God (e.g., 17:7), the state of the διαθήκη enables Paul to overcome this portrayal. Genesis 17 begins with a command for Abraham to walk blamelessly before God, after which—and, thus, seemingly, in consequence of which—God promises that he will establish his διαθήκη with the patriarch (17:1–2).¹⁸⁵ As this opening dynamic suggests, while God does make many promises to Abraham and his seed in Gen 17, these prom-

183 The phrase occurs an additional seven times in the LXX: in Gen 24:7; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4; and Num 18:19. Both Gen 13:15 and 17:8 reflect וְלִירוּעַץ in the MT and refer to God's promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed.

184 So de Boer, *Galatians*, 222; Hays, "Galatians," 264; Martyn, *Galatians*, 339; Betz, *Galatians*, 156. On the basis of rabbinic arguments that relate the 430-year sojourn of Exod 12:40 to the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 15, Daube, *New Testament*, 438–39, argues that Paul's subsequent reference to the 430 year gap between the Abrahamic covenant and the giving of the law (Gal 3:17) identifies Gen 15:18—τῷ σπέρματί σου—as his source. The lack of a καὶ in Gen 15:18 and the irrelevance of the exact number of years for Paul's argument in Gal 3:17 render this explanation untenable. The citation's placement of καὶ and lack of a preposition similarly rule out Gen 22:18—καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου—as the source, contra C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?," *TynBul* 54 (2003): 75–86, 82–86; Becker, "Galater," 53; Schoeps, *Paul*, 180–81; Brown, *Galatians*, 144. I affirm, however, the importance of Gen 22:18 for the overall argument; see the main text above.

185 Noting that imperative + cohortative constructions in Hebrew typically render a purpose or result clause, T. Desmond Alexander, "Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision," *JSTOT* 25 (1983): 17–22, 19, argues that Gen 17:1–2 should be translated "be blameless so that I may make my covenant" (emphasis original). Cf. Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (NSBT; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007), 87.

ises nevertheless remain conditional.¹⁸⁶ The διαθήκη could still be set aside or revoked; its maintenance requires obedience. Like a testament before the testator dies, the διαθήκη in Gen 17 therefore does not exhibit the irrevocability that Paul ascribes to a ratified διαθήκη in Gal 3:15.

According to Gal 3:17, however, God does ratify the Abrahamic διαθήκη well before the giving of the law. When does this ratification occur? The obvious answer is Gen 22 when, as a result of Abraham's obedience in the *Aqedah*, God swears by himself that he will fulfill all that he has promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen 22:16–17). In other words, the conditional promises of Gen 17 become unconditional and irrevocable for both Abraham and his seed in Gen 22.¹⁸⁷ Hebrews 6:13–18 exhibits a similar understanding, claiming that Abraham obtains the promise only with God's oath, which makes it “unchangeable” (ἀμετάθετον). The markedly different vocabulary in Hebrews suggests an independence of thought that perhaps indicates a more widespread acceptance of this idea in early Christianity. Regardless, Paul has already primed his biblically aware readers to think in terms of Gen 22 through his citations/allusions in Gal 3:8 and 13.¹⁸⁸

The act of obedience that wins this divine assurance is Abraham's offering of Isaac—his beloved son (Gen 22:2) and only heir (cf. 21:12)—to God. This act takes on new significance when viewed through the lens of God's testamentary adoption of the patriarch. One of the most important functions of an adopted heir was to continue his adoptive line, to provide his adoptive household with a naturally born son.¹⁸⁹ The decisive test of Abraham's worthiness is therefore, fittingly, his willingness to surrender his own heir to his adoptive father (Gen 22:12, 16).

186 See, e.g., Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 263; Williamson, *Sealed*, 87–91; T. Desmond Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev: A Source-Critical Investigation of Genesis 20:1–22:19* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1997), 86. De Boer, unjustifiably divides Gen 17 into a covenant of promise that requires nothing of Abraham (17:2–8) and a covenant of circumcision that requires Abraham's obedience (17:9–14), arguing that Gal 3:15–18 has only the former in view (*Galatians*, 220–21). The agitators would have more difficulty understanding such an argument than they would refuting it.

187 A covenantal analysis yields the same result: as Alexander, “Genesis 22,” 17–21, shows, only with the oath in Gen 22 does God ratify the ברית promised in Gen 17. Cf. Alexander, *Abraham*, 86–88. Similarly, Williamson, *Sealed*, 90–91.

188 Hahn, *Kinship*, 261. On the Gen 22 allusions, see pp. 66–67 (Gal 3:8) and 129–31 (Gal 3:13) above.

189 Hence, Solon's decree prohibits adopted men from themselves adopting. See, e.g., Demosthenes 44.23–25.

Of course, God stops Abraham before he finishes the offering, providing a ram instead. This halting of the offering suggests that God refrains from taking Isaac as his heir through Abraham: like the head of any Greek οἶκος, he prefers to have a son born naturally into his household as his heir through the adopted Abraham. If, however, Isaac does not become the promised seed, then the need for a seed remains. The passage accordingly seems to contain the implicit promise that, as he provided the ram, so God himself will provide the son who will become the divine Abrahamic heir (cf. Gen 22:8). Indeed, the whole passage emphasizes God as “The One who Provides”: Abraham names the place “The Lord will provide,” and the episode gives rise to the apparently common saying “On the mount of the Lord it will be provided” (Gen 22:14).¹⁹⁰ As Gal 4:4 then indicates, God fulfills this obligation by sending his own son to be born as a son of Abraham, a son who ultimately is offered up “on the wood” (ἐπὶ ξύλου, Gal 3:13; cf. ἐπάνω τῶν ξύλων, Gen 22:9).

Jon Levenson thus rightly notes that Galatians does not establish an Isaac-Christ typology so much as a significantly more radical substitution of Christ for Isaac: “Paul argues that the ‘descendant’ who is the heir of the promise to Abraham *is not* and *never was* Isaac or the Jewish people collectively. . . . Paul’s Jesus does not *manifest* Isaac. He *supersedes* him” (emphasis original).¹⁹¹ Even this shift, however, has warrant in the Genesis texts. For example, rather than identifying Isaac as Abraham’s promised “seed,” Gen 21:12 instead states that the promised seed shall be named “*in* Isaac” (ἐν Ἰσαακ; cf. בִּיצַחֵק). Or again, after the *Aqedah*, the angel of the Lord makes promises in Gen 22:17–18 about “your seed,” an oddity given Isaac’s presence. Admittedly, the text could switch to “seed” language because σπέρμα serves as a collective noun, but the switch to the singular pronoun in the Hebrew of Gen 22:17—“your seed shall inherit the gate of *his* enemies (אִיבָיו)” —suggests that the MT, at least, has a single seed in view.¹⁹² (Known LXX manuscripts omit the pronoun, but Paul may have been familiar with a Greek text that included it or with the Hebrew tradition itself.)

190 The key verb in Gen 22:8 and 14 is actually רָאָה / ὁράω, or “see.” As R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 107–8, notes, the instance in 22:8—“God רָאָה / ὤψεσθαι for himself the sheep”—practically requires that we understand the verb in the sense, “see about / see to,” hence the usual rendering as “provide.” This sense then carries over into 22:14, where the name and saying recapitulate a key theological emphasis of the narrative.

191 Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 213.

192 Collins, “Exegete,” 82–86. Collins builds on the work of T. Desmond Alexander, who also argues for a singular seed based on an apparent allusion in Ps 72:17 and the noncon-

Another feature of Greek adoption also seems to come into play. A Greek father's lack of complete *potestas* over his family suggests that, unlike in Roman *adrogatio* adoptions, a father who was being adopted would (or at least could) leave any preexisting children behind to maintain his original household. Demosthenes' *Contra Leocharem* seems to confirm this suggestion. As previously mentioned, Attic law allowed an adoptee to return to his original household as long as he left a naturally born son in the adoptive household (Demosthenes 44.64). In the Leochares case, the need for a returning adoptee's naturally born son to be adopted into the adoptive household (e.g., Demosthenes 44.23) makes sense only if the son had remained behind in his father's original household.¹⁹³ Such would seem to be the case with Isaac as well.

For readers naturally inclined to understand διαθήκη as a reference to testamentary adoption, the *Aqedah* account in Gen 22 portrays Isaac as one passed over by God. He remains the son of Abraham whose birth is promised in Gen 17, and he retains his membership in Abraham's original household. Along with his descendants, he then inherits from his father a share in the διαθήκη that assures his eventual adoption as a son of God (Gen 17:21; cf. Gal 4:1–5, 24–27). Nevertheless, Isaac does not qualify as a naturally begotten son of God—he is born before the ratification of the διαθήκη, after all¹⁹⁴—and God therefore refrains from appointing him as the promised seed.¹⁹⁵ The role of seed accordingly falls to Christ, the one Abrahamic descendant who does not require an adoptive διαθήκη to become a son of God. Significantly, Gen 22:16–18 simply declares the promises to the seed; it does not tie them to the Abrahamic διαθήκη.

Effectively, then, Paul counters any appeals to Gen 17 by implying that this passage must be read in light of Gen 22, a movement indicated by his

secutive verbal form that distinguishes the final clause of Gen 22:17 from the collective seed mentioned earlier in the verse.

- 193 Contra, e.g., Rubinstein, *Adoption*, 58–59, who explains the son's adoption by suggesting that the son of a returning adoptee had to be posthumously adopted as the son (i.e., no longer a grandson) of the adoptive father. This scenario cannot make sense of the speaker's objection that the original adoptee was himself adopting a son (e.g., Demosthenes 44.23).
- 194 Paul's argument ignores Abraham's subsequent sons with Keturah (Gen 25:1–2). If pressed, he would presumably argue that they do not qualify as heirs since God had already specified that the legitimate heir must come through Abraham's wife Sarah (Gen 17:15–19) rather than his concubines (cf. Gen 25:5).
- 195 As Chapters 5 and 6 will explain, this distinction between Abraham's single divine seed and his descendants who share in the adoptive διαθήκη creates a tension that God resolves through the law.

importing of the singular seed from the latter passage into his citation of the former. Again, gentile members of Paul's audience would not need to grasp these details to identify Christ as the seed based on his status as a son of both God and Abraham. The agitators, for their part, would also have a difficult time offering superficial rebuttals to this understanding of Abraham's seed in a Greek-speaking context where appeals to the biblical text would continually run into the term διαθήκη and its connotations of testamentary adoption. Finally, Isaac remains Abraham's son born according to promise, as Paul claims in 4:23. This explanation for Christ's identification as Abraham's seed thus meets the three criteria for a satisfactory reading identified at the beginning of this discussion.¹⁹⁶

Having thus made the case that διαθήκη in Gal 3:15 and 17 signifies "adoptive testament," I conclude this chapter by returning to Hahn's objection that the Apostolic Fathers all understand the term διαθήκη as "covenant." The Hellenistic origins of an adoptive testament can account for the apparent lack of attestation for this meaning of διαθήκη in the Apostolic Fathers and, indeed, the vast majority of the history of interpretation. Early western interpreters such as Tertullian were more familiar with Roman law, which did not provide for true testamentary adoptions.¹⁹⁷ That subsequent interpreters from the East such as John Chrysostom at the end of the fourth century seem similarly unaware that διαθήκη could designate an adoptive testament should come as no surprise given the apparent demise of the practice in the centuries after Paul.¹⁹⁸ By the time interpreters again became aware of testamentary adoption as an interpretive possibility, assumptions about the practice's early demise in Greece conspired with a by-then-well-established interpretive tradition to make the possibility seem moot.

Nevertheless, one early Hellenistic interpreter does appear to interpret the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an adoptive testament: Irenaeus of Lyons, a disciple of Polycarp originally hailing from Smyrna in Asia Minor. The one passage where

196 See p. 139.

197 Marcion simply "erased" 3:16 with its emphasis on Abrahamic descent. See Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.4.

198 The bestowal of Roman citizenship on all free inhabitants of the Empire—thereby making Roman law applicable throughout the provinces—through the issuing of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 CE probably hastened this demise, although the *constitutio* seems to have left local legal systems in place as well. See Olivier Hekster, *Rome and its Empire, A.D. 193–284* (Debates and Documents in Ancient History; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 52–53, 123.

Irenaeus clearly cites Gal 3:16 intriguingly defines the Abrahamic seed in terms of divine adoption: “[Abraham’s] seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord” (*Haer.* 5.32.2; ca. 182–188).¹⁹⁹ He similarly associates adoption with the promised Abrahamic inheritance as benefits conferred on the seed in *Haer.* 4.8.1: “God, who introduces, through Jesus Christ, Abraham to the kingdom of heaven, and his seed, that is, the Church, upon which also is conferred the adoption and the inheritance promised to Abraham.”²⁰⁰ More tellingly, *Epid.* 8 explicitly connects adoption with the διαθήκη, claiming that “To them that believe [God] is as Father, for in the end of times He opened up the covenant[sic] of adoption.”²⁰¹ It therefore seems likely that Irenaeus understood the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an adoptive testament in Galatians.²⁰²

Of course, Hahn could justly object that a covenantal understanding of διαθήκη could have led Irenaeus to infer adoption as well. This potential objection contains the key, I suggest, to understanding Paul’s use of διαθήκη. Scholars have traditionally viewed testaments and covenants as very different entities, with the former determining inheritance, the latter, obligations.²⁰³ I have argued in this chapter that we should expand our understanding of Hellenistic testaments to include the possibility of adoption, i.e., the establishing of a kinship tie with its incumbent obligations. Increasingly, Hebrew Bible scholars have similarly argued that Semitic covenants derive their inherent obligations from the establishing of a kinship relationship.²⁰⁴ While important

199 ANF 1:561. Irenaeus cites Luke 3:8 (a reference to God’s raising up children for Abraham from the stones) and Gal 4:28 to support this characterization of the seed before he cites Gal 3:16, which he advances specifically to show that believers receive Christ. A citation of Gal 3:6–9 then concludes the discussion of the seed’s identity, while the adoption language itself echoes Gal 4:5. Accordingly, although Irenaeus does not emphasize 3:15–16 as its basis, his characterization of the seed seems to rely heavily on the larger Abrahamic argument in Galatians.

200 ANF 1:471.

201 Armitage Robinson, *St. Irenaeus: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: Translated from the Armenian with Introduction and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1920), 76.

202 Irenaeus’s understanding of this adoption differs from the understanding I have suggested. For instance, he holds that everyone who receives Christ thereby receives both divine adoption and Abrahamic sonship. He accordingly does not distinguish between Abraham’s sons and seed, both of whom he identifies with the church (e.g., *Haer.* 5.32.2).

203 E.g., Hahn, *Kinship*, 257.

204 E.g., Frank Moore Cross, “Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel,” in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3–21, 8: “Oath and covenant . . . is . . . a widespread legal means by which the duties and privileges of kinship may be extended to another individual or group, including aliens.” See, too, Hahn, *Kinship*, 1–31.

distinctions remain, this restoration of the kinship context for each instrument suggests that the two διαθήκαι had more in common than is usually recognized.

This proposed overlap between testaments and covenants with regard to kinship ties / adoption carries significant implications. For instance, the shared kinship context could help explain why LXX translators originally rendered ברית with διαθήκη instead of συνθήκη.²⁰⁵ More importantly, given my conclusion that Galatians uses διαθήκη in the sense of testamentary adoption, the shared kinship context also clarifies both how Jerusalem could accept a gospel grounded in Abraham's testamentary adoption (Gal 2:6–10) and why Paul never rebuts the covenantal nuance of the underlying Hebrew, even citing the more covenantal aspects of a διαθήκη elsewhere (1 Cor 11:25; Rom 11:27). In short, as long as adoption provides the key to understanding the Abrahamic διαθήκη—as I contend it does for Paul—covenantal and testamentary interpretations of the διαθήκη prove largely interchangeable.²⁰⁶ Context must accordingly determine the particular interpretation that Paul is invoking, and the context of Gal 3 points overwhelmingly to an understanding of διαθήκη as “adoptive testament.”²⁰⁷

205 Norton, *ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 35, notes that, in classical Greek, διαθήκη could designate a unilaterally determined agreement between two parties that was accepted/sealed by an oath or solemn promise (Aristophanes, *Av.* 440). This rarely but firmly attested meaning makes διαθήκη a potentially appropriate term to designate a divine ברית, although the later Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian all prefer συνθήκη (Behm, *TDNT*, 126). For current explanations of the LXX's preference for διαθήκη, see Jackson, “Name,” 52–56, 60–67, and the literature cited there.

206 Cf. Rastoin, *Tarse*, 177, who suggests that Paul constructs his argument so that διαθήκη could be understood as “covenant” by Jewish readers and as “adoptive testament” by Greek readers.

207 I leave aside the question of whether a covenantal or a testamentary understanding of the διαθήκη is more fundamental to Paul's thinking.

The Singularity of Abraham's Seed and the Law's Irrelevance for Inheriting the Promise in Gal 3:15–20

The Problem of the Abrahamic Seed's Singularity

Chapter 4 began analyzing Paul's "seed" language by identifying Abraham's divine adoption as the basis for the seed's identification with Christ in 3:16. Since only Christ qualifies as a naturally born son of both God and Abraham, this asserted identification seems intended to support the point that Paul actually argues in 3:16, namely, that the seed is "one." This chapter and the next accordingly examine the singularity of Abraham's seed: why Paul regards it as important, how it functions in his argument, and how it compares to the seeming plurality of seed in 3:29.

The argument for the seed's singularity in 3:16 could serve one of two purposes: it could either affirm the unified nature of Abraham's collective seed or insist on the seed's numerical singularity. Noting the purportedly collective understanding of Abraham's seed in 3:29 ("if you are of Christ, you are Abrahamic seed") and the grammatical arbitrariness of denying that σπέρμα could function as a collective noun, Richard Longenecker contends that 3:16 emphasizes the unity—i.e., the "corporate solidarity"—of Abraham's (collective) seed.¹ This solidarity, however, has no relevance to the surrounding discussion of the law's relationship to the διαθήκη in 3:15–20. It also forms the basis of standard Jewish interpretations of Abraham's seed, making it difficult to understand why Paul would have to argue for this point. Indeed, Longenecker can account for Paul's argument with only the weak suggestion that it represents "a possible swipe at the targumic plural ['and to your sons'],"² a targumic plural with which the gentile Galatians seem unlikely to have been familiar. This lack of contextual relevance and argumentative purpose makes a collective understanding of the seed in 3:16 improbable.

Interpretations in which the verse insists on the seed's numerical singularity, however, have typically fared little better. As Chapter 4 notes, the common view that the singularity justifies the seed's identification with Christ would both

¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 132. Cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 142–43.

² Longenecker, *Galatians*, 131.

beg the question and leave Isaac's potential claim to seedship unaddressed.³ Alternatively, N. T. Wright suggests that Paul understands σπέρματι to signify one "family," a sense that contrasts with "the plurality of families which would result if the Torah were to be regarded the way Paul's opponents apparently regarded it."⁴ I fail to see how the agitators' position would create a plurality of families. If anything, bringing Jew and gentile together in their differences would seem to create a greater plurality than forcing all members to live like Jews in a single, Torah-observant family.

The letter's two other explicit references to Abraham's seed prove helpful in plotting a better way forward. Significantly, both instances appear in close proximity to the number "one" (εἷς). In 3:19, Paul portrays the law as an interim measure instituted "until the seed [τὸ σπέρμα] to whom it was promised should come," a claim immediately followed by the curious observation in 3:20 that "a mediator is not of one [ένός], and God is one [εἷς]." Similarly, 3:29 identifies Paul's readers as "Abrahamic seed" (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα) because they are all "one [εἷς] in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

I contend that Paul invokes the numerical singularity of Abraham's seed because of its implications for the law as a determiner of Abrahamic descent. This chapter covers 3:15–20, where he argues that the law, which was given to *many* descendants, cannot be the basis for the Abrahamic inheritance, which was promised to *one* seed. Galatians 3:21–4:11—the subject of Chapter 6—then counters this negative appraisal of the law's role with a positive explanation of its true purpose, namely, enabling God to remain true to his promise to Abraham without supplementing the number of beneficiaries beyond the original *one* seed. As will become apparent, the singular seed's dual sonship—Abrahamic and divine—shapes both the problem that the law addresses and the solution that it represents: by preventing the Jews from receiving the promise of the Spirit apart from Christ, the law ensures that this dual sonship finds fulfillment only with Christ and, subsequently, with the union of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God in him. The law thus finds its end

3 Appealing to the apparent plurality of the seed in 3:29 (Fung, *Galatians*, 155–56; Bruce, *Galatians*, 172) and/or to rabbinic interpretations that simply highlight a particular feature of a word in the biblical text (Dunn, *Galatians*, 183–85; Hays, "Galatians," 264; Witherington, *Grace*, 244–45), several scholars suggest that that 3:16 affirms the seed's singularity without also denying a collective or plural aspect to the seed. Such interpretations face the additional difficulty that 3:16 actually does deny that σπέρμα "concerns many."

4 Wright, *Climax*, 163; cf. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2 vols.; vol. 4 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 2:868.

and fulfillment in funneling the Jews into Christ, a point that again undercuts any effort to bring the gentile Galatians under law.

The Structural Unity of 3:15–20 as an Argument against Law-Based Inheritance

I have suggested that Paul emphasizes the seed's *singularity* in 3:16 because it renders the law given to a *plurality* of Israelites irrelevant to the seed's promised inheritance. To show how Paul develops this line of thought as part of his larger argument about the law, I will first consider the argument of 3:15–20 as a whole and then 3:17–18 in particular before turning to the discussion of the seed in 3:19–20.

Most scholars understand the repeated theme of God's Abrahamic διαθήκη to unite 3:15–18 as a (sub)unit.⁵ To be sure, a common thread does run through 3:15–18. Galatians 3:15 establishes the general legal principle that no one sets aside or supplements a ratified διαθήκη. Galatians 3:16 supplies the specific case of God's promises to Abraham and his singular seed Christ. Galatians 3:17–18 then applies the general principle in 3:15 to the specific case in 3:16.

The identification of these verses as a unit therefore falters not because of what it takes into account but because of what it overlooks. Of the two actions—setting aside (ἀθετεῖ) and supplementing (ἐπιδιατάσσεται)—that no one performs on a ratified διαθήκη according to 3:15, 3:17–18 envisions only the possibility of invalidation (ἀκυροῖ, καταργέω); it does not explicitly address the possibility of supplementation.⁶ Similarly, of the two recipients of the promises in 3:16, 3:17–18 mentions only Abraham; his singular seed does not appear. Treating 3:15–18 as a unit thus creates two “extraneous” elements in 3:15–16: the additional claim that no one supplements a ratified διαθήκη (3:15) and the emphasis on the promise's also being spoken to a single seed, who is

5 Several scholars even link 3:15–18 to the preceding verses—either 3:1–14 (Witherington, *Grace*, 251; Longenecker, *Galatians*, vii; Rohde, *Galater*, vii) or 3:6–14 (Oepke, *Galater*, 7; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, viii)—as the conclusion of Paul's Abrahamic argument, with 3:19–25 then opening a new section that extends to 4:7. Against this particular proposal, the tight chiasmic structure of 3:6–14 (see p. 113 above), the opening vocative ἀδελφοί in 3:15, and a shift in argumentative appeal from (primarily) scripture in 3:6–14 to (primarily) secular socio-legal parallels in 3:15–4:7 all suggest that 3:15 begins a new phase of the argument.

6 Moore-Crispin, “ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ,” 77, notes that cognates of ἀθετέω (3:15) and ἀκυρώ (3:17) often appear together as a stock phrase (εἰς ἀθέτησιν καὶ ἀκύρωσιν) in legal documents (e.g., *BGU* 44.16, 281.18–19).

Christ (3:16).⁷ Of course, Paul might simply argue a bit loosely at this point, but two related factors indicate a more carefully constructed argument.

First, as mentioned in the διαθήκη discussion of Chapter 4, ἐπιδιατάσσομαι—the would-be extraneous word in 3:15—appears nowhere else in the extant Greek sources apart from a few later Christian writers. It is therefore possible that Paul himself coined the term for this part of his argument. Even if the word does not originate with Paul, however, its rarity still suggests that its inclusion has an intended purpose. That is to say, ἐπιδιατάσσομαι was not common enough for ἀθετεῖ ἢ ἐπιδιατάσσεται to be a stock phrase that Paul might have written without thinking about the actual meaning of both components.

Second, lexical connections tie the two supposed extraneous elements in 3:15–16 both to each other and to the argument in 3:19–20. Lexically, ἐπιδιατάσσομαι constitutes a compound verb consisting of the preposition ἐπί and the verb διατάσσομαι. Richard Hays has noted the connection with the “ordaining” (διαταγείς) of the law through angels in 3:19.⁸ The ἐπί, however, also resurfaces, not in 3:19 but in 3:16: “[not] as concerning [ἐπί] many but as concerning [ἐφ’] one.” Although ἐπί does occasionally occur with the sense of “concerning” in classical Greek, this sense of ἐπί occurs nowhere else in the NT.⁹ I propose that Paul indicates “concerning” with ἐπί rather than with the more common περί (e.g., Rom 15:14) to link this point about the singular seed with the preceding ἐπιδιατάσσομαι. In addition to these ties with 3:15, a common lexical theme also unites 3:16 and 3:19–20, namely, oneness (ἐφ’ ἐνός, 3:16 / ἐνός, εἷς, 3:20).¹⁰ These connections then indicate a way in which someone could try to “supplement” (as ἐπιδιατάσσεται must be understood) a ratified διαθήκη without annulling it: not by adding *conditions* but by adding *heirs*.

The preceding observations suggest the following structure for 3:15–20.¹¹ As mentioned above, Gal 3:15–16 connects the general legal principle that no

7 Cf. Tolmie, *Persuading*, 129, who suggests that the irrelevant discussion of Jesus Christ as the seed in 3:16 disrupts the flow of—and thus weakens—Paul’s argument. See, too, Moo, *Galatians*, 229—“Paul’s christological interpretation of the ‘seed’ . . . is a parenthesis within a parenthesis”—and Williams, *Galatians*, 95. Burton, *Galatians*, 509, even proposes that οὐ λέγει . . . Χριστός represents “a primitive corruption . . . due to an early editor rather than to Paul.”

8 Hays, “Galatians,” 264. So, too, de Boer, *Galatians*, 229–30; Rastoin, *Tarse*, 193.

9 BDAG lists Gal 3:16 as the only NT instance where ἐπί “introduce[s] the object which is to be discussed or acted upon” (365, meaning 8). Cf. Jer [LXX] 35:8. This use of ἐπί appears as the last entry with a genitive in LSJ (621, meaning A.III.4).

10 Wright, *Climax*, 169.

11 See the similar structural analysis of 3:15–20 in Matera, *Galatians*, 129–30; Pierre Bonnard, “L’épître de Saint Paul aux Galates,” in *L’épître de Saint Paul aux Galates / L’épître de Saint*

one sets aside or supplements a ratified διαθήκη to the specific case of God's promises to Abraham and his singular seed Christ. The subsequent verses then use this principle to establish that the law can therefore neither 1) invalidate the promise inherent in the earlier Abrahamic διαθήκη (3:17–18) nor 2) supplement the promise made to the single seed by adding heirs (3:19–20). Not only does this analysis account for all of the components mentioned in 3:15–16, but, by distinguishing between the promise made to Abraham and the promise made to the seed, it also makes sense of the switch from the plural “promises” (αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι) in 3:16 (cf. τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν, 3:21) to the singular “promise” in 3:17–18 (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, 3:17 / ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας, 3:18; cf. ἐπηγγέλται, 3:19).¹² The ensuing sections will further explain and justify this proposal by examining 3:17–18 and 3:19–20 in greater detail.

Law-Based Inheritance Would Unjustly Set Aside the διαθήκη with Abraham (3:17–18)

Gal 3:17–18

¹⁷τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος οὐκ ἀκυροῖ, εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν. ¹⁸εἰ γὰρ ἐκ νόμου ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός.

¹⁷And I say this: the law that comes 430 years later does not invalidate a διαθήκη previously validated by God so as to cancel the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance [is] based on law, [it is] no longer based on a promise, but God has granted [it] to Abraham through a promise.

Galatians 3:17–18 clearly states that the law's subsequent arrival prevents it from invalidating the earlier Abrahamic διαθήκη. Most scholars assume that Paul uses this point to argue that the Abrahamic inheritance therefore cannot

Paul aux Éphésiens (CNT 9; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1953), 5–132, 70. Neither of these scholars relates 3:19–20 to the problem of supplementing a ratified διαθήκη in 3:15, however.

12 Many scholars (e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 228; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 130–31) suggest that Paul uses the singular and the plural indiscriminately. Schlier, *Galater*, 45, relates the plural ἐπαγγελίαι to the three promises named in the covenant of Gen 17: 1) fruitfulness, 2) land, and 3) knowing God. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 142, attributes the plural to the many times God made the promise.

be based on law. Viewed in this way, 3:17–18 essentially addresses the basis on which Christians receive a share in the Abrahamic inheritance: Abraham becomes a definitive example whose reception of the inheritance through a promise secures, by virtue of a validated διαθήκη's unchangeable nature (3:15), a promise-based inheritance for all Abrahamic heirs. Since the law would instead grant the inheritance based on obedience, it accordingly cannot serve as the basis for the Abrahamic inheritance. The points of exegetical disagreement then typically focus on whether or not Paul's failure to attribute the law's origins explicitly to God suggests an additional point of criticism.¹³

The intuitive sense that this argument seems to make masks several points at which the interpretation actually fits the text rather awkwardly. First, this reading has trouble explaining the argumentative thrust in 3:17. The verse forcefully establishes the promise's chronological priority, but, as Yon-Gyong Kwon notes, this priority ultimately proves superfluous: Abraham's reception of the inheritance would, by itself, establish the nature of the unchangeable διαθήκη.¹⁴ While rhetorical emphasis could potentially explain the focus on chronological priority, the inference Paul draws from this priority also seems misguided since no one involved in the discussion would argue that the law *does* invalidate the Abrahamic διαθήκη. Even if Paul derives the claim in 3:17 from 3:15–16—and neither the opening τοῦτο δὲ λέγω in 3:17 nor the supporting claim (γάρ) in 3:18 suggests that he does—the relevant inference would seem to be that the law does not *change* or *supplement* the Abrahamic διαθήκη. After all, no one would assume that the law had retroactively nullified Abraham's own share in the inheritance.

Second, accounting for the role of 3:18 proves similarly difficult in this interpretation. In essence, the verse puts forward two premises:

- A. Law-based inheritance is incompatible with promise-based inheritance
- B. Abraham's inheritance is promise based

13 Witherington, *Grace*, 245–46, e.g., sees no significance in the lack of divine attribution. For the suggestion that the omission foreshadows the purported argument in 3:19–20, see Hays, “Galatians,” 264–65; Matera, *Galatians*, 131–32. Martyn, *Galatians*, 342, even argues that the adding of a codicil “by someone other than the testator” constitutes the key issue in 3:17–18. Paul has no need to attribute the law's origin explicitly to God, however, because everyone would already assume this connection.

14 Kwon, *Eschatology*, 119. Kwon resolves the problem by arguing that Abraham has not yet received what was promised, thereby leaving only the temporal argument.

Taken together, these premises demonstrate the incompatibility of law-based inheritance with Abraham's inheritance through the διαθήκη. Mere incompatibility, however, does not establish (γάρ) the claim in 3:17 that the law does not annul the promise.¹⁵ Paul's argument would beg the question.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, God does not actually grant Abraham an inheritance based solely on a promise. As first-century Jews widely recognized, it is Abraham's faithfulness in offering up his son in the *Aqedah* that leads to God's validating the διαθήκη in Gen 22.¹⁶ Indeed, Paul himself invokes this tradition in Gal 3:8–9 when he cites God's post-*Aqedah* promise to bless the nations (Gen 22:18) as the basis for the gentiles' being blessed "with the faithful Abraham" (σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ).¹⁷ Furthermore, the anticipatory introduction of the promise theme in Gal 3:14b—"the promise of the Spirit"—seems to identify the promises to Abraham and his seed preeminently with the blessing of the nations through the giving of the Spirit that results from Abraham's faithfulness.¹⁸

The resulting association of the promised inheritance in Gal 3:18 with the blessing of the nations in 3:8 and 14 enables a very different understanding of 3:17–18. Two points prove particularly important. First, the inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed consists at least partially in a promise of blessing—i.e., a promise of the Spirit, a promise of life—for the nations. We might even say that the blessed gentiles compose Abraham's inheritance. Second, as noted in the discussion of 3:8–10, "all the nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 3:8) due to receive the promised Spirit would originally have included Abraham's descendants through Sarah.

Viewed against this background, Paul's argument in 3:17–18 suddenly makes more sense. By the principle in 3:15, the law that comes 430 years after God's validation of the Abrahamic διαθήκη does not invalidate that earlier agreement.¹⁹ It therefore cannot cancel the διαθήκη's inherent promise to bless all the nations, including Israel (3:17). In other words, a failure to observe the law ultimately cannot keep Israel from receiving the Abrahamic blessing. Paul then proves (γάρ) this point in 3:18 by showing the impossibility of the

15 Contra Betz, *Galatians*, 159, the γάρ in 3:18 does not abandon its normal causal/explanatory force to introduce a summary ("hence," 154) of 3:15–17.

16 See Sir 44:20–21; 1 Macc 2:52; Wis 10:5–6; *Jub.* 17:15–16; Jas 2:21–24. On the development of this tradition, see Levenson, *Death*, 175–80.

17 See p. 67.

18 See pp. 124–31. ἐπαγγελία appears in 3:16, 17, 18[2x], 21, 22, 29; ἐπαγγέλλομαι, in 3:19. The only other instances of the ἐπαγγέλ- root in Galatians appear in 3:14; 4:23, 28.

19 The 430 years presumably comes from Exod 12:40–41.

opposite assumption, namely, that the inheritance depends on law observance. If *Abraham's* inheritance—i.e., the blessing of all nations with the Spirit and life—depends, in Israel's case, on *the Jews'* subsequent law observance, then it would no longer depend on a promise, but God has already granted this inheritance to Abraham through a promise.²⁰ The passage does not consider whether individuals secure their own share in the inheritance through observing the law or trusting in a promise. Rather, it considers whether subsequent conditions can be imposed on a third party so as to invalidate an already secured inheritance.²¹

Significantly, this shift in perspective enables us to account for all of the noted problems with the traditional interpretation. For example, the role that Abraham's faithfulness plays in securing the διαθήκη / inheritance no longer creates difficulties since Abraham no longer functions as the definitive exemplar who establishes a promissory basis for inheritance. Abraham stands instead as the one whose inheritance secures a blessing for others. The promise thus serves, not as the basis for Abraham's inheritance, but as the means through which he receives it (cf. δι' ἐπαγγελίας, 3:18).

This construal also makes better sense of the various structural and argumentative enigmas that plague the traditional interpretation. The focus on Abraham's personal inheritance, for instance, justifies the initial concern in 3:17 with invalidating—rather than supplementing—the Abrahamic διαθήκη. The way in which 3:18 supports 3:17 becomes clear as well. The law cannot invalidate the promise (3:17) because if it could, then the inheritance would not have depended on God's promise to Abraham in the first place (3:18).

Four minor features also support this interpretation. First, 3:17–18 never mentions the Abrahamic seed, an oddity in the traditional reading that effectively understands the passage to establish the basis for the (collective) seed's inheritance. My construal, in contrast, has no need to introduce the seed into the argument. Second, Paul claims that a law-based inheritance would “no longer” (οὐκέτι) be based on promise. The shift in practice that “no longer” indicates accords better with a discussion of Abraham's continuing personal

20 The perfect tense of κεχάρισται emphasizes the continuing implications of this earlier promise. Contra de Boer, *Galatians*, 225, it does not therefore indicate “that Abraham is being presented as a collective personality . . . Abraham stands for the sons of Abraham.” Kwon, *Eschatology*, 120–21, rightly notes that χαρίζομαι without a direct object means “to show favor,” not “to give.” The logic of the sentence, however, requires Paul to show the promissory nature of the inheritance, suggesting that 3:18b assumes the previously mentioned “inheritance” as the understood direct object.

21 Cf. Hahn, *Kinship*, 262, although he focuses on the implications for gentiles.

inheritance than with a discussion of the basis on which individuals currently inherit (in which case a simple “not” would have sufficed). Third, as Charles Cosgrove notes, the effective interchangeability of διαθήκη and ἐπαγγελία in the traditional interpretation renders the final phrase of 3:17—“so as to cancel the promise” (εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν)—redundant.²² Taking the article in τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν as an anaphoric pointer to the aforementioned promise of the Spirit in 3:14b resolves the apparent redundancy: the final phrase highlights a specific implication of invalidating the διαθήκη, namely, canceling the promise to bless all the nations.²³

Fourth and finally, the passage leads to the question in 3:19, “Why, then, the law?” The standard reading in which 3:17–18 concludes that the law provides no access to the Abrahamic inheritance could certainly give rise to this question, a possibility often enhanced by the perception that these verses portray the law in a rather pernicious light. The interpretation that I have proposed, however, differentiates the law from an Abrahamic promise identified as the sole source of blessing, Spirit, and life. It therefore fundamentally undercuts the traditional Jewish understanding of the law as providing a path to those very things. In other words, rather than arguing that the Abrahamic inheritance cannot be based on law, 3:17–18 instead makes a much more radical claim: the law cannot serve as a basis for blessing and life. With no need for pernicious overtones, this interpretation thus presses the question of the law’s purpose with a force that the more typical reading simply cannot match.

Galatians 3:17–18 thus argues that tying a person’s share in the Abrahamic blessing to law observance would essentially set aside God’s promise to Abraham. As I will now show, 3:19–20 further challenges this traditional connection by arguing that a law-based inheritance would also supplement the number of heirs, thereby illegally modifying the original terms of God’s promise.

22 Cosgrove, “Arguing,” 541. Cosgrove contends that the phrase limits the extent to which the law actually *does* invalidate the διαθήκη, i.e., the law does not invalidate the διαθήκη to the extent of canceling the promise since such a cancellation would be illegal. He thus suggests that Paul’s argument presumes the implied minor premise that “the law represents [God’s] attempt to nullify or amend the Abrahamic covenant,” a supposed implication of the agitators’ position that Paul here adopts in order to refute (536–37). That Paul would expect his audience to intuit such a radical implied premise and recognize it as an implication of the agitators’ position, however, seems implausible. For the purported synonymy of διαθήκη and ἐπαγγελία, see Matera, *Galatians*, 131.

23 Cf. Hahn, *Kinship*, 462 n. 88.

Law-Based Inheritance Would Unjustly Supplement the Recipients of the Promise to the One Seed (3:19–20)

Gal 3:19–20

^{19a}Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα
ᾧ ἐπήγγελται, ^bδιαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. ^{20a}ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς
οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν.

^{19a}*Why, then, the law? For the sake of transgressions it was added until the seed to whom it was promised should come, ^bhaving been ordained through angels by [the] hand of a mediator. ^{20a}But a mediator is not of one, ^band God is one.*

Having established in 3:17–18 that blessing and life come through the Abrahamic promise and not through the law, Paul opens 3:19 with the obvious follow-up question: why, then, the law? He develops the significance of his immediate answer—“it was added for the sake of transgressions”—in 3:21–4:11. I will accordingly discuss this part of the response when considering that passage in Chapter 6. In the meantime, Paul digresses from the question of purpose to characterize the law further as having been “ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator.” As mentioned earlier, the first half of this phrase—“ordained through angels” (διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων) echoes the ἐπιδιατάσσεται in 3:15. The second half—“by the hand of a mediator”—leads to one of the most disputed claims in Paul: “but a mediator is not of one, and God is one” (ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν).

In his thorough review of the history of the interpretation of 3:19–20, Terrance Callan provides three helpful principles for whittling the multitude of interpretations down to the truly viable.²⁴ First, given the apparent context of the giving of the law at Sinai, the “mediator” in 3:19 must refer to Moses. Second, with no indication of a change in referent, ὁ μεσίτης in 3:20a must accordingly also refer to Moses, whether as a particular reference to “that mediator” or as a general reference to the class of mediators to which Moses belongs. These first two principles, which enjoy widespread acceptance today, rule out the predominant interpretations from the second through the sixteenth centuries, which understood one or both instances of μεσίτης as referring to Christ (cf. 1 Tim 2:5).

24 Terrance Callan, Jr., “The Law and the Mediator: Ga. 3:19b–20” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976), 4–5.

Callan's third principle argues that since ἐνός οὐκ ἔστιν in 3:20a and εἷς ἔστιν in 3:20b form an antithesis, the references to "oneness" in each half of the verse should be interpreted equivalently.²⁵ This criterion effectively eliminates the many interpretations that seek to attach a substantive (Abraham, seed, people, family, nation, etc.) to the genitive ἐνός in 3:20a.²⁶ It also suggests that, given the common interpretation of ἐνός as signifying that "ὁ μεσίτης is not [a mediator] of one," we should probably understand the εἷς in 3:20b as an appeal to God's status as a numerically singular entity and not to his universality.²⁷

25 Contra Michael Bachmann, *Antijudaismus im Galaterbrief?: Exegetische Studien zu einem polemischen Schreiben und zur Theologie des Apostels Paulus* (NTOA 40; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1999), 103–6, who argues that the difference in inflected form, the position of ἐνός before the negation, and the need to supplement ἐνός mentally with ἀλλὰ πολλῶν while adding nothing to εἷς all suggest that the ἐνός and εἷς could function differently.

26 For example, Wright, *Climax*, 169, suggests that ἐνός refers back to the "one family" of Abraham's true σπέρμα (3:16), giving 3:20a the sense, "Moses is not the mediator through whom this promised 'one seed' is brought into existence." This construal has several problems. First, to account for the lack of an article before ἐνός, Wright reads the ὁ as the clause's full subject and μεσίτης ἐνός as its predicate: "he [ὁ] is not (the) mediator of (the) single family [μεσίτης ἐνός]" (170). This unintuitive grammatical construction, which Wright justifies with an appeal to Hebrew idiom, ignores the parallelism with ὁ θεός in 3:20b: ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνός οὐκ ἔστιν (3:20a) / ὁ δὲ θεός εἷς ἔστιν (3:20b). Second, Wright connects 3:20b to 3:20a by suggesting that "God is one" (3:20b) implies God "desires one family" (170), a *non sequitur*. Indeed, even the purported parallel in Rom 3:29–30 (171) portrays God as a god of both Jews and gentiles, of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, thereby drawing distinctions within God's "family" (cf. Rom 4:11–12). Furthermore, according to Wright, 3:20b supplies the basis for the claim in 3:20a: "God, being himself one, desires a single family, but the Mosaic law was given to one race only and therefore cannot put this plan into operation" (172, emphasis added). A γάρ in 3:20b would support this reading better than the δέ that appears. More importantly, the proposed logic is faulty: there is no *a priori* reason why the Mosaic Torah could not be at least one of the factors uniting God's single family.

27 Like many scholars, Callan, "Law," 195–203 understands the claim that "God is one" in 3:20b as an affirmation of God's universality and simplicity (cf. Rom 3:29–30). (Whereas most scholars assume that Paul's claim derives from the *Shema* in Deut 6:4, Paul's use of "God" instead of "the Lord" suggests to Callan that it derives instead from Greek monotheism. Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 172 n. 87.) Callan accordingly argues for ἐνός in 3:20a as a qualitative genitive, i.e., "ὁ μεσίτης is not one." A qualitative genitive, however, seems awkward: had Paul intended to contrast the "oneness" of Moses and God, he would likely have used the same nominative εἷς in 3:20a that appears in 3:20b instead of a rare (in Koine Greek, at least) qualitative genitive. The difficulty in determining what it means to say that Moses, unlike God, is not "one" / "simple" further increases the awkwardness. Callan's ultimate

By itself, the claim that a mediator is not “of one” could signify either the mediation of at least two parties or the representation of a group.²⁸ The former option seems unlikely: it would fail to differentiate the law from the promise—the promise also involves two parties—and make the contrasting claim in 3:20b that “God is one” difficult to understand.²⁹ In contrast, the straightforward implication of the two premises in 3:20—i.e., that ὁ μεσίτης is not “of” the one God—fits well logically with the idea of mediatorial representation of a group. Thus, although the shift in case from ἐνός to εἰς indicates that Paul does not contrast the mediator with God, the logic suggests that he does sharply distinguish the mediator from God. To what end does Paul make this distinction? Interpreters have identified two main possibilities.

Many scholars view Paul’s argument as an attempt to separate God from the giving of the law. According to this interpretation, Paul disparages the law by arguing that Moses did not represent the one God but the plurality of angels mentioned in 3:19.³⁰ Several factors render this reading untenable, not the

suggestion that Moses’ “complexity” refers to his combining divine inspiration with human language in giving the law (218–19) would hardly constitute a valid critique since neither the divine promise (which also finds expression in human language) nor Jesus avoids such complexity.

- 28 Interpreting the intermediary as the Angel of Yahweh (i.e., as “Yahweh in human form”), Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham, 2015), 166, understands 3:20 to affirm that, although Yahweh and this intermediary are differentiable (ἐνός οὐκ ἔστιν), they are nevertheless still “one” (εἰς ἔστιν). A lack of connection with the rest of Paul’s argument in Gal 3:15–20 undermines this otherwise intriguing proposal.
- 29 A few scholars try to resolve the difficulty by suggesting that Paul here contrasts the bilateral/reciprocal nature of the mediated law with the unilateral nature of the promise (see Callan, “Law,” 15, 22, 24), but the claims in 3:20 imply nothing about the types of agreement in view. The suggestion of Betz, *Galatians*, 171–73, that Paul argues for the inferiority of the law on the grounds that the plurality of relationships inherent in the definition of a “mediator” does not conform to the oneness of God creates a superficial contrast that makes little sense. According to Baugh, “Galatians 3:20,” 66, the oneness refers to Trinitarian unity, with 3:20 then arguing that the intra-Trinitarian promise of the Father to the Son/Seed could not involve a mediator. That Trinitarian unity would have been so well understood by Paul and his audience that he could invoke it in such an elliptical way seems implausible.
- 30 E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 227–28; Martyn, *Galatians*, 365–70; Hübner, *Law*, 27; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 248–49. Albert Vanhoye, “Médiateur des anges en Ga 3:19–20,” *Bib* 59 (1978): 403–11, 408, suggests that the mediator in view is not Moses but an angelic representative (cf. Acts 7:38) who then meets with Moses as the human mediator. Gaston, *Paul*, 35–44, who suggests that the so-called “tradition” of angelic involvement in the giving of the law

least of which would be the utter implausibility of trying to divorce God from his holy law and angels. The agitators would have no problem refuting such an argument. Indeed, even 3:19 identifies the angels only as intermediaries, stating that the law was ordained “through” them (δι’ ἀγγέλων).³¹ The defense of the law’s place in God’s plan that immediately follows in 3:21–22, not to mention Paul’s favorable view of the law elsewhere (e.g., Rom 7:12), also make it unlikely that 3:20 seeks to deny or somehow limit the divine origin of the law.

I accordingly suggest that Paul’s argument instead seeks to differentiate the law from the promise to Abraham’s single seed. In this view, he differentiates the mediator from God—indeed, from the whole divine side of the transaction—in order to identify Moses as a representative of the plurality of Israelites who received the law (cf. Exod 20:19; Deut 5:27–31).³² He then allows the Galatians to draw the clear implication:³³ if the law was given to a *plurality* of Israelites, then it cannot be related to the inheritance promised to Abraham and his *single* seed.³⁴ That is to say, the law cannot be related to the

(cf. Acts 7:38, 53; Josephus, *A. J.* 15.136) constitutes a wholly modern construct resulting “from a Billerbeck mentality” (37), interprets Gal 3:19 as signifying that the angels administered God’s law among the nations (43).

- 31 Noting that διὰ with a genitive could designate either an intermediate or an ultimate source when limiting a passive verb (BDF §223.2), Martyn, *Galatians*, 356–57, 364–70, argues that context requires the preposition to identify the ultimate source in 3:19: διαταγείς δι’ ἀγγέλων, “ordained *by* angels.” Similarly, de Boer, *Galatians*, 229; Hübner, *Law*, 26–27. For Paul to expect his readers to derive such a novel position from an ambiguous preposition whose primary meaning supports the more traditional understanding makes little sense. Accordingly, had Paul intended to designate the angels as the ultimate source of the law, we would have expected him to use the unambiguous ὑπό, as he does in Gal 1:11 (εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ), 3:17 (προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ), and 4:9 (γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ). So Witherington, *Grace*, 257; Berger, “Abraham,” 56.
- 32 As Zahn, *Galater*, 177, notes, God has the angels to speak for him, so Moses must represent the people. For other interpreters who understand 3:20 as identifying Moses as the representative of Israel, see the literature cited in Callan, “Law,” 10, 22 n. 40, 25. I see no basis for the contention of de Boer, *Galatians*, 228, that “the issue is the plurality of the *initiating* party” (emphasis original).
- 33 The argument in 3:20 must have an implied point since 3:20b is not a conclusion. So Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 249; Martyn, *Galatians*, 365–66.
- 34 Wilhelm Lüttert, *Gesetz und Geist: Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes* (BFCT 22/6; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1919), 63, draws this inference from 3:20a alone. See, too, the helpful graphical portrayal in Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 119, which shows 3:20a as the reverse formulation of the “one seed” argument in 3:16. Cf. Matera, *Galatians*, 129–30, who identifies this contrast but interprets it as pointing to the mediated (and thus inferior) nature of the law.

Abrahamic διαθήκη because, if it were, it would effectively have supplemented (cf. ἐπιδικάσσεται, 3:15) the original promise by increasing the number of beneficiaries.³⁵ Paul thus differentiates the law from the promise here, not on the grounds that it is mediated, but on the grounds that it is given to a plurality.

Callan objects to this reading on the grounds that a mediator need not imply representation of a group.³⁶ I have two observations in response. First, a mediator necessarily implies only the involvement of two or more parties, an implication that, as noted above, seems unlikely to constitute Paul's point since it cannot distinguish the law from the promise. Second, having acknowledged the absence of absolute logical rigor, it is worth observing that the specifics of the giving of the law do support the larger point. The problem, in other words, does not negate the claim that the law was given through Moses to all Israel. Accordingly, even if the agitators objected to the logic of the formulation, they would still have to address the biblical portrayal of Moses as the representative through whom God makes his διαθήκη with all the Israelites (e.g., Exod 19:3–8).

In conclusion, then, this reading of 3:20 meets all three of Callan's criteria: it understands ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου as a reference to Moses, it understands ὁ μεσίτης in 3:20a as a general reference to the class of mediators to which Moses belongs, and it interprets the ἐνός and the εἰς in 3:20 equivalently. This reading

35 The Jews' inheriting of a share in the Abrahamic διαθήκη (see pp. 175–80) does not supplement the διαθήκη by adding beneficiaries since the Jews ultimately receive the inheritance only by becoming part of the unified "one" in Christ (see Chapter 6). Significantly, the faith necessary for this union then qualifies them as the faithful Abraham's true sons and heirs (cf. Gal 3:7).

36 Callan, "Law," 25. So, too, Burton, *Galatians*, 191. This problem disappears if ὁ μεσίτης in 3:20a refers back to the specific mediator mentioned at the end of 3:19, i.e., Moses. Such a reading, however, would require that 3:20 assume rather than establish Moses' representation of the Israelites, thereby making 3:20b superfluous. The anaphoric reading of Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 100–109, avoids this particular problem by interpreting 3:20b as making the additional point that the same God stands behind both the law and the promise, a reading that not only interprets the ἐνός and the εἰς differently but also problematically presumes that the anarthrous ἐνός refers exclusively to the one Abrahamic seed. Other difficulties also bedevil the anaphoric interpretation of ὁ μεσίτης. For instance, the present tense of ἔστιν in 3:20a suggests a general statement rather than a historic reference. Wright, *Climax*, 169, argues that a plural would be more appropriate for a general statement, but the use of the singular ὁ κληρονόμος to signify "an heir" in 4:1 provides a perfect parallel to the generic use of ὁ μεσίτης here. Furthermore, had Paul intended a specific reference to Moses, he could have simply named him: since the argument focuses on the plurality of beings involved rather than the mediated nature of the law, Paul gains nothing by referring to Moses as "a mediator." A general statement thus better accounts for Paul's use of the abstract μεσίτης.

also accounts for the shift from the genitive ἐνός in 3:20a to the nominative εἷς in 3:20b and makes sense of the lexical connection with Abraham's "one" seed in 3:16. Finally, it has the advantage of assuming the natural alignment of God with his angels (and law): the plurality of angels represent the one God, while the one mediator represents the plurality of Israelites. Galatians 3:19–20 thus neither disparages the law nor distances it from God. Instead, the verses deny that the law could function as a basis for the inheritance promised to the sole Abrahamic seed, thereby bringing out the initial significance of Paul's argument for the seed's singular nature in 3:16.

In truth, however, the singular seed has a more integral significance for understanding the law than this negative implication would suggest. Chapter 6 explores this more robust relationship between the singular seed and the law.

The Abrahamic Seed as the Key to Understanding the Law in Gal 3:21–4:11

The Law as God's Response to the Seed's Required Singularity

Having denied that the law could play any role in leading to the blessing and life that come through the Abrahamic promises, it remains for Paul to explain the role that the law actually does play and, in so doing, to explain its current obsolescence for those in Christ. As Chapter 5 noted, he begins this explanation in 3:19 with the brief comment that “for the sake of transgressions [the law] was added until the seed to whom it was promised should come” (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπηγγέλται). Paul thus ties the end of the law to the coming of Abraham's seed, a point that interpreters often fail to appreciate adequately.

Scholars all too quickly assume that Paul associates the end of the law with Abraham's seed because, as 3:16 indicates, Christ is Abraham's seed.¹ Donald Juel grounds this christological focus by identifying 3:19a as a “paraphrase” of the blessing in Gen 49:10, which prophesies a continuous line of rulers from Judah “until Shiloh comes” (עַד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילֹה) / “until the things reserved for him should come” (ἕως ἃν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ).² Juel points out that 4Q252 V and the targumim understand this phrase messianically—an interpretive tradition with which the Galatians would again likely be unfamiliar—but neither context nor lexical connections support the proposal of this extremely weak echo. The typical interpretation of εἰς Χριστόν in 3:24 as indicating that the law functions as a παιδαγωγός for the Jews “until Christ” could perhaps justify this christological focus, but I will argue below that a temporal reading of εἰς Χριστόν misreads the argument in 3:24.

Nevertheless, the chief problem with this christological reading of the seed in 3:19 lies in identifying the basis on which Paul would understand the Christ to end the law. Appeals to a purportedly widespread Jewish belief that the Mosaic Torah would cease to apply in the messianic age have little evidence to support them³ and, as Heikki Räisänen notes, cannot overcome Paul's

1 E.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 225, 235.

2 Juel, *Messianic*, 86.

3 See Peter Schäfer, “Die Torah der messianischen Zeit,” *ZNW* 65 (1974): 27–42.

absolute silence regarding such a belief when it would have proved so helpful to his cause.⁴ Dunn's proposal that Christ's death makes the sacrificial system of the law obsolete by achieving a permanent atonement cannot explain why this death would invalidate purportedly "ceremonial" aspects of law such as circumcision, especially if the law's relevance as a guide in "moral" areas remains.⁵ Making this argument even less likely, with the exception of a possible allusion in 1:4—"[Jesus Christ,] who gave himself for [ὑπέρ] our sins in order that he might deliver us from the present evil age"—atonement for sin has played no part in the argument of Galatians.⁶

Given the difficulty of finding any reason in the text, many interpreters choose to focus more on the *existence* of a termination point for the law than on the *reason* for this point, an interpretive strategy that effectively reduces Paul's claim to mere assertion.⁷ That Christ brings the law to an end, however, would seem to be one of the key points on which Paul and the agitators disagree. It is a point, in other words, that he needs to establish, not assume or assert.

I suggest that scholars have such a difficult time identifying a compelling argument for the end of the law because they assume Christ's seedship to be largely irrelevant to the issue, a stance that effectively reverses Paul's logic. Galatians 3:19, after all, ties the end of the law, not to the coming of the Christ, but to the coming of Abraham's seed. The law therefore does not end with the arrival of the Christ, who also happens to be Abraham's seed, but with the arrival of Abraham's seed, who also happens to be the Christ. This proposed importance of the Abrahamic seed finds confirmation in Gal 3:21–22 when Paul identifies the giving of the (Abrahamic) promises as the purpose (ἵνα) of a transgression-oriented law. To understand Paul's logic, then, we must seek to understand the relationship between the law and Abraham's seed, particularly why the seed's arrival would bring about the end of the law.

This connection between the law and the seed suggests that the law's purpose somehow relates to the Abrahamic διαθήκη. Indeed, the preceding discussion of 3:15–20 has revealed a problem that this inviolable διαθήκη creates. On the one hand, the promise to bless all the nations (3:8; cf. Gen 22:18) originally includes Abraham's descendants through Sarah. On the other hand, only two individuals receive this promise to bless the nations: Abraham and his single

4 Räisänen, *Paul*, 236–40. Bruce, *Galatians*, 83–84, 176, argues for the incompatibility of Messiah and Torah in Paul's logic but grounds it primarily in Paul's Damascus Road revelation.

5 Dunn, *Galatians*, 190.

6 On the nonsacrificial understanding of 3:13, see pp. 116–22 above.

7 E.g., Williams, *Galatians*, 97; Hansen, *Galatians*, 102; Matera, *Galatians*, 133; Fung, *Galatians*, 160; Burton, *Galatians*, 189; Meyer, "Galatians," 130.

seed. The problem arises in that the promised blessing comes to the nations in the form of the Spirit (3:14). As will become apparent, reception of the Spirit “adopts” a person as a son of God (Gal 4:5–6; cf. Rom 8:15). Jews who receive the Spirit would therefore qualify as Abrahamic seed by virtue of their being sons of both Abraham and God. God thus faces a dilemma: he must fulfill the promise inherent in the inviolable Abrahamic διαθήκη, but fulfilling it would effectively supplement the διαθήκη through the addition of heirs.

This chapter argues that, according to 3:19a and 3:21–4:11, God resolves this problem by “adding” the law. The law distinguishes Israel from the nations, thereby excluding them from the scope of the promise. The law cannot, however, ultimately keep the promise from the Jews, a task that would effectively modify Abraham’s promised inheritance (cf. 3:17–18). Instead, it compels Abraham’s Jewish sons into the patriarch’s single seed—i.e., into Christ—where they then receive the promised blessing. In this way, the law enables God to remain faithful to both requirements of the Abrahamic διαθήκη, extending the διαθήκη’s promised blessing to Abraham’s physical descendants without supplementing the number of heirs. Hence, the law works to support the promises (cf. 3:21).

The law achieves this desired effect through a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, it compels the Jews to rely on faith for their righteousness by exposing their sinfulness. On the other hand, it separates them out from the nations, thereby forcing them into Christ if they want to receive the Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles and become part of the Abrahamic seed who inherit. (Of course, this step of faith effectively qualifies them as Abraham’s true sons [cf. 3:7] and, accordingly, his heirs.) The law thus fulfills its purpose in each case, not when it is kept, but when it is transgressed, hence Paul’s claim that it was added “for the sake of transgressions” (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν, 3:19). Furthermore, since entering into this union in Christ necessarily involves dying to the law (Gal 2:19), it also marks the end of the law (cf. Rom 10:4).

This understanding of the law must have constituted a key point of difference between Paul and the agitators, who likely held to the traditional Jewish view of the law as a source of life. Thus, although the explanation in Gal 3:19a expresses this view of the law *in nuce*, Paul could hardly hope to make such a crucial point in this abbreviated form. Galatians 3:21–4:11 accordingly supports and expounds upon this initial claim. As I will argue below, Gal 3:21–22 establishes this transgression-oriented understanding of the law in opposition to the more common view that the law serves to give life. Galatians 3:23–4:11 then argues based on the union of Jew and gentile as Abraham’s seed that the law has no relevance for those in Christ.

The identification of Paul’s readers as Abrahamic seed, however, raises another potential issue, namely, how this admitted plurality in seed

membership corresponds to the earlier insistence on the singularity of Abraham's seed. After all, Paul has just divorced the law from the promise in part on the grounds that the law was given through a mediator to the plurality of Israelites and, thus, not to the single seed (3:19–20). The following analysis will therefore also show how Christ's mediation differs from the mediation of Moses, i.e., how the plurality of people identified as Abrahamic seed in 3:29 remains consistent with the singularity of his seed in 3:16. Not surprisingly, the answer involves Paul's claim that his readers are all "one" (εἷς) in Christ (3:28; cf. 3:16, 19–20).

The Law Ensures the Seed's Singularity by Promoting both Faith and Christ (3:19, 21–22)

Gal 3:19a, 21–22

^{19a}Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπηγγέλται . . . ²¹Ὁ οὖν νόμος κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ]; μὴ γένοιτο· εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὄντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ᾦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη. ²²ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

^{19a}*Why, then, the law? For the sake of transgressions it was added until the seed to whom it was promised should come . . .* ²¹*Is the law then against the promises [of God]? By no means! For if a law that was able to make alive had been given, then righteousness would be based on law.* ²²*But the scripture has enclosed everything under sin so that the promise might be given based on Jesus Christ's faith to those who believe.*

If the law does not qualify a person to receive the blessings and life that come through the Abrahamic promises, then why was it given? Paul begins to answer this question in 3:19 by claiming that the law was "added" (προσετέθη) for the sake of transgressions. This "adding" of the law establishes the law's secondary nature and, by the principle articulated in 3:15, its inability to set aside or supplement the earlier Abrahamic διαθήκη. Most scholars accordingly see this claim as establishing the law's inferiority to the promise or even as denying the divine nature of the law.⁸ I suggest, however, that Paul has a much more positive understanding of the law. In short, as the following analysis will show,

8 For inferiority, see Burton, *Galatians*, 188; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 138. For the denial of the law's divine nature, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 354; Hübner, *Law*, 26–29.

the need for the law arises as a direct result of the ratified Abrahamic διαθήκη's unchangeable nature.

Paul states in 3:19 that the law was added τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν, or “for the sake of transgressions.” The improper preposition χάριν can be either telic or causal.⁹ Unlike ἁμαρτία, however, a παράβασις by definition constitutes the violation of a preexisting law or standard; as Paul points out in Rom 4:15, where there is no law, neither is there transgression (οὐ . . . οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος, οὐδὲ παραβάσις; cf. Rom 5:13–14). Indeed, although Paul uses παράβασις and its cognates rather infrequently,¹⁰ all of the other instances presume this specific nuance. Causal explanations of the χάριν in which the law comes to restrain or remedy transgressions¹¹ therefore reverse the intrinsic (and normal Pauline) relationship between law and transgression, suggesting that χάριν instead identifies “transgressions” as the purpose of the law. Several commentators interpret this purpose more sinisterly as provoking transgressions (cf. Rom 7:5),¹² but the brevity of Paul's answer and the surrounding context provide no reason for seeing in this answer anything more than the law's basic role of defining the standards that make transgressions possible (cf. Rom 3:20, 7:7).¹³

Grounding the purpose of the law in its establishing of transgressions essentially identifies the law as a servant of condemnation and death (cf. 2 Cor 3:7, 9). After all, defining transgressions only introduces penalties, curses, and death; avoiding such missteps would at best maintain the prelaw status quo.¹⁴ Paul accordingly asks the pressing question in 3:21: does this law that brings

9 BDAG “χάριν,” 1078–79.

10 παράβασις appears only in Rom 2:23, 4:15, 5:14; Gal 3:19; cf. 1 Tim 2:14. The cognate παραβάτης appears in Rom 2:25, 27; Gal 2:18.

11 For the law as restraining transgressions, see David John Lull, “The Law was our Pedagogue: A Study in Galatians 3:19–25,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 481–98, 487; Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* (PG 61.654); and many of the church fathers. For (provisional) atonement through the sacrificial system as the motivating factor, see Dunn, *Galatians*, 189–90. For “the law” here as post-Decalogue “additions” necessitated by Israel's sin—a view that the article before νόμος makes difficult—see Hahn, *Kinship*, 265–67. Cf. Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 2.3.19–20 (PL 26:391C [440]), who argues that the law comes in response to the “transgressions about to be forbidden” [*transgressiones prohibitura*], i.e., Israel's worshipping of the golden calf and murmuring against God.

12 E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 354–55; Bruce, *Galatians*, 175; Betz, *Galatians*, 165; Schlier, *Galater*, 152; Meyer, “Galatians,” 128.

13 So Moo, *Galatians*, 234; Witherington, *Grace*, 255–56; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 246; Burton, *Galatians*, 188; Calvin, “Galatians,” 100; Matera, *Galatians*, 128, 132. Schreiner, *Galatians*, questions how the law could “[define] sin only until Christ came” (240). In short, it ceases to define transgressions for those who have already transgressed it into Christ.

14 Cf. Hong, “Does Paul Misrepresent the Jewish Law?,” 182.

condemnation and death work against the promises that seek to bring life? He responds to this suggestion of divine schizophrenia with an emphatic negative (μὴ γένοιτο), a position that he then supports (γάρ) with a twofold argument.¹⁵ He first shows the inadequacy of the alternative, traditional position that God gave the law to bring life, then argues that, far from working against the promises, a transgression-oriented law actually supports them.

The traditional Jewish view that the law provides the path to life¹⁶ would initially seem to be more in line with God's promises of life¹⁷ than Paul's claim that the law's purpose lies in establishing transgressions. Paul, however, undercuts such a simplistic comparison of end results by highlighting a troubling implication of the traditional view: "if a law had been given that was able to make alive (ζωοποιῆσαι), then righteousness would be based on law" (3:21). The second-class conditional construction assumes the protasis to be false, an initial assumption that Paul will effectively establish in 3:22.

Scholars debate whether this "making alive" serves as the result or the cause of the righteousness in the apodosis, but both logical necessity and Paul's rebuttal (ἀλλά) in 3:22 require that righteousness be the middle term between law and life.¹⁸ If righteousness forms the basis for the giving of life—a common first-century understanding that we have already encountered in the analysis of 3:8—then the protasis logically implies the apodosis: a law could give a person life only by bestowing righteousness. The same cannot be said if righteousness instead depends on life: a law's ability to give a person life would not necessitate that righteousness therefore be based on that law. Similarly, Paul's refutation that "the scripture shuts up everything under sin" (3:22a)¹⁹ implies that no

15 Contra Tolmie, *Persuading*, 137, who contends that the γάρ in 3:21 does not have its usual causal force but instead introduces a new idea. Tolmie accordingly suggests that instead of actually answering the question raised at the beginning of 3:21, Paul redirects the audience's attention to his main point, namely, the inferiority of the law.

16 See, e.g., Lev 18:5; Prov 6:23; Sir 17:11; Bar 3:9, 4:1; Ps. Sol. 14:2.

17 The contrast of promise and law in 3:21–22 suggests that the promise in 3:22 has the same goal of "making alive" as Paul hypothetically attributes to the law in 3:21. Of course, "making alive" well describes the blessing that Paul associates with reception of the Spirit (cf. 3:8, 14).

18 Ellicott, *Galatians*, 84; Meyer, "Galatians," 150.

19 The switch from νόμος in 3:21 to γραφή in 3:22 could serve to extend the basis for Paul's claim to nonlegal or non-Torah passages, to extend the scope of Paul's claim to include those not under the law (i.e., the gentiles; cf. τὰ πάντα), or both. The singular ἡ γραφή could also indicate that Paul has a specific text in mind (see Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 147–48), e.g., Ps 14[LXX 13]:1–3 (cited in Rom 3:10–12), but the absence of a clear scriptural reference to this effect in the immediate context suggests a broader understanding. (Cf. Moo,

one attains righteousness based on law observance since everyone under the law will ultimately transgress it, but this implication has ramifications for the law's ability to give life only if righteousness constitutes the middle term.

Galatians 3:21–22 thus forms a *modus tollens* argument²⁰ in which Paul disproves the initial assumption (the law can give life) by refuting its necessary implication (righteousness comes through law observance). He leaves this negative result at the level of implication, pressing ahead in 3:22b with his positive case for a unity of purpose between a transgression-oriented law and the promises. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the further implications of this refutation before moving to the positive argument.

If law observance determines righteousness, then the inevitable transgressions of the law would disqualify a person from receiving life through the promise, a possibility disallowed earlier in 3:17–18. By highlighting the law-based righteousness that a life-imparting view of the law requires, Paul therefore effectively implies that it is this traditional view of the law—not his transgression-oriented view—that conflicts with the promises. Ironically, then, following the law as the path to life can result only in death and the negation of the promise. The law simply cannot have been given for the purpose of establishing righteousness or, consequently, life. Furthermore, as was also the case with Paul's argument in 3:11–12, the agitators could refute this logic only by making the implausible (and unscriptural) claim that they followed the law perfectly.²¹

If the law does not seek to establish righteousness, then we are left with Paul's conclusion that the law exists to define transgressions. How does a transgression-oriented law actually support the promises? Paul answers this question in 3:22. Given the context of explaining the law's relationship to the promise (3:21), we should understand the claim that scripture has shut up everything under sin with respect to its implications for the law, namely, that the law will condemn everyone under it. The ensuing purpose clause—"so that the promise might be given based on Jesus Christ's faith to those who believe" (ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν)—then

Galatians, 239.) At any rate, the argument does not require the audience's familiarity with a specific text, only their acknowledgment of the general truth.

20 *Modus tollens*: p → q, not q, therefore not p. So Moo, *Galatians*, 238.

21 Paul's subsequent warnings that those who receive circumcision must "do the whole law" (ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι, 5:3) and that even the circumcised do not keep the law (6:13) therefore seem likely to reflect the implications of Paul's own argument rather than the claims of the agitators.

establishes the relationship between a transgression-oriented, condemnatory law and the giving of the promise.

Before examining this relationship, I should note once again that, although the πάντα in 3:22 unites all humanity under sin, the wider context of addressing the law's relationship to the promise suggests that this purpose clause draws the implications of that universal sinfulness for those under the law, i.e., the Jews.²² This conclusion does not deny that gentiles also receive the blessing through faith; they do. Rather, this conclusion simply suggests that 3:22 does not have gentiles in view.

Galatians 3:22 characterizes the giving of the promise in two ways: the law enables the promise to be given 1) “based on Jesus Christ's faith” (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) 2) “to those who believe” (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). Although both aspects involve the exercise of πίστις, I suggest that they nevertheless point to distinct functions of the law. Starting with the latter phrase, most interpreters rightly understand this verse to highlight the law's role in revealing sinfulness.²³ It exposes the Jews' sinful nature in large part so that they will rely on faith for their righteousness rather than on works, hence “to those who believe” (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν; cf. Rom 4:1–13; 7:7–10). Paul explores Christ's interaction with this aspect of the law's role in Gal 3:23–29.

How does ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ further define this giving? Recent discussions of this phrase focus on the interpretation of the genitive. Scholars who read Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ here as an objective genitive (“based on faith in Jesus Christ”) make the subsequent τοῖς πιστεύουσιν redundant. Advocates of a subjective reading pointing to Christ's “faithfulness,” in contrast, must awkwardly attribute different meanings to the nominal (πίστεως, “faithfulness”) and verbal (πιστεύουσιν, “have faith”) forms of the πίστ- root within a span of only six words.²⁴ Reading the phrase instead as a reference to Jesus' faith in allowing himself to become cursed by the law—see the discussion of 3:13 in Chapter 3—avoids both of these problems.²⁵

22 Contra Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145, who suggests that 3:22 “portrays ‘everyone without distinction’ (τὰ πάντα used of people) as under the law's curse.” Although Gal 3:22 does portray everyone as being under sin, it provides no grounds for expanding the scope of the law to include everyone.

23 E.g., Hays, “Galatians,” 269; Hansen, *Galatians*, 106; Matera, *Galatians*, 138; Bruce, *Galatians*, 180; Burton, *Galatians*, 197.

24 R. Barry Matlock, “Detheologizing the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *NovT* 42 (2000): 1–23, 4, 10, esp., 10 n. 28.

25 Jesus' acceptance of a cursed death involves faithfulness, of course, but the expression ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ points to his trust in God's ultimate vindication. On the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, see Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*:

Regardless of their understanding of the genitive, interpretations of ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ typically share a more fundamental problem: they assume that Paul here portrays the law as pointing the Jews (at least) to their need for a savior.²⁶ The σῶζω / σωτήρ root, however, never appears in Galatians, nor is it clear why an awareness of one's sinfulness should automatically lead to the realization of the need for a savior. Why, that is, would simply trusting in God's promise and the atoning sacrifices prescribed by the law not suffice? Furthermore, the idea of believing "in" Jesus as savior—a concept scholars often associate with τοῖς πιστεύουσιν even if not with ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ²⁷—usually entails a sacrificial (i.e., atoning) understanding of his death, the benefits of which a person must appropriate through faith. Once again, with the possible exception of 1:4, such sacrificial language is absent from Galatians.²⁸ Even more problematical, the suggestion that the law points people to their need for a savior can explain neither why the Jewish Christians would no longer be under the law nor why the gentile Galatians must not come under the law. In other words, it is not at all clear why the appearance of a savior would render the law anathema. If anything, a "savior"-type argument would seem to play into the agitators' hands: believers have been "saved" so that they might now fulfill the righteous law.

I accordingly suggest that the phrase ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ instead points to a second function of the law, a function tied directly to the dual sonship of the Abrahamic seed. In short, the law forces the Jews to unite with

Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009). For others who have espoused "Christ's faith," see Debbie Hunn, "Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 15–31, 20. Hung-Sik Choi, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Galatians 5:5–6: Neglected Evidence for the Faithfulness of Christ," *JBL* 124 (2005): 467–90, 471 n. 20, denies that πίστις Χριστοῦ could mean "Christ's faith" because 1) "[Christ's faith] is not a prominent theme in Paul" and 2) "Paul never employs Christ as the subject of the verb πιστεύω." My argument in this book disputes the former reason and undermines the force of the latter. Aquinas' argument that Jesus could not have had faith because he saw/knew everything (*Summa theologiae* 3.7.3) essentially denies Jesus' full humanity and goes against scriptural indications that Jesus was not omniscient (e.g., Matt 24:36). It also unjustifiably focuses on "faith" as belief rather than trust (for this general point, see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 79–80, 384–86). Regardless, I doubt that Aquinas' perspective would have crossed Paul's mind.

26 E.g., Ellicott, *Galatians*, 80: "The office of the law was to . . . make man feel his need of a Savior."

27 E.g., Hays, *Faith*, 276.

28 For the lack of sacrificial language in Gal 3:13, see pp. 116–22.

gentiles in Christ in order to receive the blessing of the Spirit / adoption as sons of God that qualifies them as Abraham's seed. If no law differentiated Israel from the gentiles, then the Jews would be able to receive the Spirit based on their faith in God once the blessing came to (the rest of) the nations. After all, Abraham's descendants were numbered among the generic "nations" included in the blessing until the law set them apart from τὰ ἔθνη as a distinct people. Receiving the Spirit that makes them sons of God, however, would then qualify the Jewish recipients as Abrahamic seed while the (other) gentile recipients would not attain to that status. Such an arrangement would unjustly favor the Jews. It would also create multiple seeds of Abraham, thereby supplementing the original promise. By establishing the boundaries of the law, God thus ensured that the sons of Abraham could not participate in the blessing without transgressing the law and incurring its curse. Overcoming this curse and becoming Abraham's seed then requires the Jews' integration into the single seed Christ, who himself overcomes the curse through his faith. Hence, the promise comes ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Paul further develops the implications of Christ's coming with respect to this role of the law in Gal 4:1–11.

The law thus serves a twofold purpose with respect to the promise. On the one hand, it exposes the sinfulness of those under it, thereby forcing them to rely on their faith for righteousness. Mere faith, however, cannot suffice for Jews to receive the promise since the law sets them apart from the other nations, i.e., from the gentiles to whom the Abrahamic blessing comes. Accordingly, on the other hand, the law forces the Jews to go through Christ as Abraham's single seed to escape from its curse and receive the promised blessing of life. The law therefore compels the Jews to embrace both faith and Christ in a way that they would otherwise not have to do to receive the promised inheritance.

Significantly, the scholarly literature commonly identifies these two purposes of the law, albeit in problematical ways. Traditional analyses recognize the law's role in exposing sinfulness but can relate the resultant need for faith specifically to Christ only by constructing an artificial law-works / faith-Christ dichotomy that overlooks the promises and grace already inherent in the law. Recognizing this problem, proponents of the New Perspective typically argue for a more sociological analysis of the law that emphasizes its role in separating the Jews from the nations. Because they assume that the gentiles share in *Israel's* blessing, however, this view creates a paradox in which God disbands—by removing the law that distinguished Israel—the very entity that he is supposedly blessing. My suggested reading combines these two insights so as to resolve their various issues: the law points to the necessity of faith for righteousness so that Jews might have the confidence to transgress the law through union with Christ. In this way they join the gentiles in receiving the

Abrahamic blessing of the Spirit that qualifies them as sons of God and, thus, as true Abrahamic seed.

The ensuing section shows how Paul develops this line of thought in 3:23–4:11.

The Interdependent Union of the Jewish Sons of Abraham with the Gentile Sons of God and the End of the Law in 3:23–4:11

Galatians 3:23–29 and 4:1–11 present remarkably similar scenarios. In both passages, Paul invokes a familial analogy to portray the Jews (“we”) as minors under guardians (ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, 3:25 / ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους . . . καὶ οἰκονόμους, 4:2) until Christ releases them into their maturity. Both passages highlight Christ’s bringing an end to a submissive/servile state (οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, 3:25 / οὐκέτι . . . δοῦλος, 4:7). Both passages close by drawing a conclusion about the gentiles’ (“you”) status as heirs (κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι, 3:29 / κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ, 4:7).

Nevertheless, the two scenarios also exhibit significant differences, even with respect to these points of similarity. In 3:23–25, the guardian παιδαγωγός corresponds to the law; in 4:1–3, the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι correspond to τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. In 3:23–29, faith provides the key to emerging from under the παιδαγωγός; in 4:1–7, minors emerge from under their guardians simply at the time set by the father. In 3:25, Paul concludes that the *Jewish* Christians (“we”) are no longer (οὐκέτι) under a παιδαγωγός; in 4:7, he concludes that the *gentile* Christian (“you”) is no longer (οὐκέτι) a slave to the στοιχεῖα. In 3:27, the believers are incorporated into Christ; in 4:6, the Spirit of God’s son is sent into the believers. In 3:29, the gentiles’ status as heirs derives from their in-Christ status as Abraham’s seed; in 4:7, the gentile’s status as heir derives from a Spirit-bestowed status as God’s son.

Too often interpreters collapse the differences into the similarities, with the result that they find the passages to make essentially the same point.²⁹ Brendan Byrne, however, rightly notes that an “examination of 4:1–7 will be satisfactory only if it can adequately explain why Paul doubles back in this way.”³⁰ Byrne

29 E.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 210: “recapitulation.”

30 Byrne, *Sons*, 174. The inability to account for the close connection between 3:23–29 and 4:1–7 undermines proposals for a “sons/seed of Abraham” inclusio uniting 3:7–3:29 (e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 193; Lars Hartman, “Galatians 3:15–4:11 as Part of a Theological Argument on a Practical Issue,” in *The Truth of the Gospel (Galatians 1:1–4:11)* [ed. Jan Lambrecht; MSBen: Biblical-Ecumenical Section 12; Rome: Benedictina, 1993], 127–58, 135).

ultimately concludes that 4:1–7 covers the same ground as 3:25–29, providing the evidence for what the earlier passage simply asserts.³¹ I suggest that the differences in detail instead point to a larger difference in overall argument.

To be sure, both passages describe Christ's work of freeing the Jews from the law. As I hope to show, however, the first passage focuses on their need for personal faith while the second reflects their need for integration into Christ. These verses thus chiastically develop the two purposes of the law identified in 3:22:

The law was added so that the promise might be given

- A. Based on the faith of Jesus Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 3:22)
- B. To those who believe (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, 3:22)
- B'. Law reminds the Jews that their righteousness depends on faith (3:23–29)
- A'. Law forces Jews into the one seed to receive the gentiles' blessing (4:1–11)

Furthermore, whereas 3:25–29 argues that the Jewish Christians are no longer under law (3:25) based on the gentile Christians' status as in-Christ heirs of Abraham (3:26–29), 4:1–7 argues that the gentile Christians are no longer enslaved under the στοιχεία (4:7; cf. 4:8–9) based on the Jewish Christians' status as Spirit-filled adopted sons of God (4:5–6). These two mutually compatible perspectives on Christ's work reflect the interdependent nature of Jew and gentile in Christ that results from the dual sonship and singular nature of the Abrahamic seed. They also refute any possible motivation a gentile might have for taking up the law.

*The Law as Promoter of Faith / Implications for Jews of Gentiles'
Becoming Sons of Abraham in Christ (3:23–29)*

Galatians 3:23–29 expounds the law's role in bringing the promise "to those who believe" (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, 3:22). It accordingly focuses on the law's ability to promote "faith" (πίστις), a keyword that occurs five times in the passage. Four of these occurrences appear in the first three verses (3:23–25) where, as I will show, Paul portrays the law as a παιδαγωγός seeking to inculcate faith in its charges. At the same time, he brackets this portrayal with references to the arrival of "this faith" (πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν, 3:23; ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως,

³¹ Byrne, *Sons*, 186.

3:25), thereby establishing a clear terminus for this function of the law.³² The final four verses (3:26–29) then justify this proposed temporal boundary with an argument grounded in the dual sonship of Abraham's seed. The passage accordingly identifies both the goal and the termination of the law.

Gal 3:23–25

²³Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἔλθειν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκαλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσιν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι. ²⁴ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν. ²⁵ἔλθουσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν.

²³*But before this faith came, we were watched over under the law, being compelled into the faith that was about to be revealed. ²⁴Thus, the law became our παιδαγωγός, [compelling us] into Christ so that we might be justified based on faith. ²⁵But this faith having come, no longer are we under a παιδαγωγός.*

What exactly is “this faith” that brings the law to an end with its coming? The articular *πίστις* in the opening phrase of 3:23 cannot indicate “faith” generally since Paul has already acknowledged that Abraham exercised faith even before the giving of the law (3:6).³³ A reference to faith in general would also imply that the law ceases to have authority over anyone who has faith, in which case the Jews would have no need for Christ to free them from the law and its curse (3:13, 4:5). No, this faith must be a faith that, although qualitatively similar to Abraham's faith, becomes possible only with the arrival of Christ.

Patristic commentators preferred to interpret τὴν πίστιν in the sense of “that which is believed,”³⁴ but Paul rarely if ever uses *πίστις* in a doctrinal sense.³⁵

32 The δέ in 3:23 introduces a chronological contrast to the time of fulfillment envisioned in 3:22. Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 197; Lull, “Pedagogue,” 487, it does not contrast a confinement under sin (3:22) with a confinement under law (3:23), nor does it suggest that the law mitigates the confinement under sin. See discussion in the main text.

33 Contra Betz, *Galatians*, 176: “Before Christ's coming, faith existed only exceptionally in Abraham and in Scripture as a promise. It became a general possibility for mankind only when God sent his son and the Spirit of his son.”

34 So also Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145–46, cf. 41–42.

35 Burton, *Galatians*, 198. A possible exception occurs in Gal 1:23—Ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει—although Burton argues that even this instance probably refers to subjective belief rather than objective doctrine (64). For the suggestion that 1:23 refers to the preaching of Christ as “the faithful one,” see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 892–94.

Most modern scholars therefore rightly conclude that the article functions anaphorically, referring back to the πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ mentioned in 3:22.³⁶ Of course, the significance of this conclusion depends on the meaning of πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. I suggested above that the phrase most likely refers to Jesus' own faith that God would bless him despite his becoming accursed under the law, a position that 3:23–25 supports.

Galatians 3:23 describes the role of the law in the time “before this faith came,” claiming that “we were watched over under law” (ὕπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα).³⁷ The use of the first-person verb and the reference to being “under law” indicate that 3:23 describes Jews.³⁸ Only context, however, can determine whether φρουρέω (“watch over”) portrays their position in a positive, negative, or neutral light. In this case, the explanation of this verb must fit with the brief statement in 3:19 that the law was added “for the sake of transgressions,” and it must lead to the conclusion (ὥστε) in 3:24 that the law functioned during this time as a παιδαγωγός. More importantly, it must make sense of the immediately following phrase: συγκαλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι.

Scholars typically assume that the present participle συγκαλειόμενοι in 3:23 describes an “enclosing” under either sin or law. The former option assumes that ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν carries over from 3:22, where scripture “encloses” everything under sin (συνέκλεισεν . . . ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν). The latter option links the participle to the ὑπὸ νόμον earlier in the verse, either directly (“we were guarded, being

36 Hays, “Galatians,” 270; de Boer, *Galatians*, 238; Williams, *Galatians*, 101; Hansen, *Galatians*, 107; Matera, *Galatians*, 136; Fung, *Galatians*, 168; Bruce, *Galatians*, 181; Burton, *Galatians*, 198.

37 Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 255, notes that, in contrast to ὑπὸ νόμου (“by law”), ὑπὸ νόμον (“under law”) refrains from expressly identifying the law as the active agent of the verb ἐφρουρούμεθα. He identifies God as the active agent. Cf. Vouga, *Galater*, 87–88, who argues that the agent should either remain unspecified or else be identified with those who advocate the law as a path to righteousness and life. Nevertheless, the parallel with scripture's enclosing activity in 3:22 and the interpretation of the law as a παιδαγωγός in 3:24–25 (cf. ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, 3:25) suggest that, by signifying the realm of the law's dominion, ὑπὸ νόμον effectively identifies the law as the implied subject.

38 So Taylor, “Eschatological Interdependence,” 307; Hays, “Galatians,” 269; Witherington, *Grace*, 267; Dunn, *Galatians*, 198; Matera, *Galatians*, 136; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145; Betz, *Galatians*, 176; Lagrange, *Galates*, 89. For the first-person verb as inclusive of both Jews and gentiles, see de Boer, *Galatians*, 238; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 246; Tolmie, *Persuading*, 141; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 214; Martyn, *Galatians*, 362; Williams, *Galatians*, 103; Fung, *Galatians*, 167; Bruce, *Galatians*, 182; Schlier, *Galater*, 166; Bonnard, “Galates,” 75. Dalton, “Meaning,” 39, suggests Paul has only gentiles in view.

shut up under law”) or—more likely given the intervening ἐφρουρούμεθα—indirectly by specifying the action of which the “guarding” consists (“we were guarded under law, being shut up [i.e., under law]”). Either way, these interpretations portray the law primarily as a fence around its charges, with scholars differing on whether this fence functions as a jailor guarding against escape or a protector guarding against harm.

Combining these different scenarios yields four main possibilities, all of which are problematical. Two readings portray the law as a protective guardian. David Lull, for instance, understands συγκαλειόμενοι as a causal/concessive participle that assumes ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν from 3:22. In this view, the law somehow guards those within its sphere from experiencing the full effects of sin: “because/although we had been enclosed [under sin], we were guarded under law.”³⁹ A similar result emerges from those who understand συγκαλειόμενοι as an exegetical participle identifying the constituent action.⁴⁰ While the view of the law as a protective fence in these proposals accords well with general Jewish thought, it does not correspond well to Paul’s comment in 3:19 that the law was added “for the sake of transgressions”: since “transgressions” (παραβάσεις) were not possible before the law defined them, the law could hardly be for the purpose of restraining them.⁴¹ Furthermore, the gentiles—who had neither the restricting regulations nor the atoning benefits of the law—survived their confinement under sin to share in Christ’s blessing, so it remains unclear what benefit Israel would have gained through an additional protective confinement.⁴²

Several scholars accordingly see the law functioning more as a jailor. Proponents who understand συγκαλειόμενοι in 3:23 to describe an enclosing “under law” envision the law as the near equivalent of sin in imprisoning

39 Lull, “Pedagogue,” 487. Causal and concessive participles usually precede the main verb, however. This reading also requires the relatively rare use of a present participle with the force of an imperfect. A suggestion involving more common grammatical constructions would be preferable.

40 Hays, “Galatians,” 269; Williams, *Galatians*, 103; Dunn, *Galatians*, 197; Matera, *Galatians*, 136; Belleville, “Under Law,” 60; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145, 148.

41 See p. 202.

42 Contrast the excessive claim of Williams, *Galatians*, 103: “transgressions would have destroyed the people of Israel had it not been for the restraining role of the law—the Law of Moses—which instructed, rebuked, and punished.” On the other end of the spectrum, Matera, *Galatians*, 140, observes more accurately that “[The law] could tell the Jews that they were transgressing God’s commandments”—a function that Matera labels an “advantage”—“but it did not enable them to follow those commandments.” I fail to see how this “advantage” translates into “protecting the Jew from Sin” (136).

humanity.⁴³ Alternatively, συγκλειόμενοι could express the purpose / result of the guarding as keeping people enclosed “under sin.”⁴⁴ The utter superfluousness of the law constitutes a primary difficulty for both of these readings. After all, no one can escape from sin even apart from the law. As a measure that keeps the Jews imprisoned, the law accordingly becomes redundant.

Views of the law as a protector thus have trouble explaining *how* the law serves that function while views of the law as a jailor have trouble explaining *why* the law serves that function. Both of these options, however, also share a larger problem, namely, accounting for the εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι that immediately follows συγκλειόμενοι. Most interpreters render the εἰς in a telic or, more commonly, a temporal sense. In fact, the temporal reading (cf. “until faith should be revealed,” NIV) has become almost axiomatic among recent commentators.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, despite the reading’s popularity, several factors argue against it.

The focus on faith’s arrival as the key chronological marker throughout 3:23–25—“before this faith came” (πρὸ τοῦ . . . ἔλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν) in 3:23, “this faith having come” (ἐλθοῦσης . . . τῆς πίστεως) and “no longer” (οὐκέτι) in 3:25—might initially appear to support a temporal reading of the εἰς, yet this chronological focus cuts both ways. As Burton notes, the opening clause “before this faith came” already implies the coming of this faith as a terminal point, thereby rendering a temporal εἰς redundant.⁴⁶ Burton also critiques this reading on the grounds that a temporal εἰς usually has a time word as its object,⁴⁷

43 Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 362: “Like Sin, Law was the universal prison warden”; Fung, *Galatians*, 168 n. 3: “the near-equation of sin and law”; Bruce, *Galatians*, 181: the shift from sin as jailor to law is “a distinction without much of a difference.” Paul’s silence about the possible conflation of the law with sin (contrast Rom 7:7) suggests that his argument runs in a different direction.

44 Rohde, *Galater*, 161; Betz, *Galatians*, 176; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 255–56; Schlier, *Galater*, 166–67; Bonnard, “Galates,” 75; Lagrange, *Galates*, 89; Meyer, “Galatians,” 152–53.

45 Hays, “Galatians,” 269; Martyn, *Galatians*, 362; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 215; Williams, *Galatians*, 101; Hansen, *Galatians*, 106; Dunn, *Galatians*, 198; Matera, *Galatians*, 136; Rohde, *Galater*, 161; Fung, *Galatians*, 167; Bruce, *Galatians*, 181; Betz, *Galatians*, 175; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 256; Schlier, *Galater*, 167; Bonnard, “Galates,” 76; Witherington, *Grace*, 249, 262.

46 Burton, *Galatians*, 199. Cf. Meyer, “Galatians,” 153; Ellicott, *Galatians*, 86–87. The problem runs in the other direction for the seemingly parallel εἰς Χριστόν in 3:24: a temporal reading would already presume the apparently controversial claim that the supervision of the law-παιδαγωγός ends with the coming of faith, a claim that Paul must spend several verses defending after he introduces it explicitly—seemingly for the first time—in 3:25.

47 Burton, *Galatians*, 199. See, e.g., εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, Phil 1:10; εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν, 2 Tim 1:12. Although εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου in 1 Thes 4:15 does not have a time word as an

an objection that highlights the difficulty of transforming τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι (lit., “the faith about to be revealed”; cf. Rom 8:18) into a suitable temporal construction. Paul’s use of an infinitival phrase proves especially difficult to explain. Furthermore, a temporal reading leads to a lack of clarity in the argument by reducing the role of the law in 3:23 simply to guarding / enclosing. Since φρουρέω, συγκλείω, and the parallel image of the παιδαγωγός in 3:24 could all have positive/protective or negative/punitive connotations in the ancient world, the lack of guidance as to the significance of these terms threatens to make Paul’s meaning ambiguous, not only to modern scholars but likely to his original audience as well.⁴⁸

A telic reading of the εἰς that sees “the [obtaining of] the faith that was about to be revealed” as the purpose of the law’s confinement avoids these problems but raises others.⁴⁹ In the first place, a telic εἰς would require that a reader supply the verbal element missing from the prepositional phrase, making this construction a fairly cryptic and abbreviated way of making a controversial point; even Burton admits in arguing for this interpretation that it contains elements “not certainly expressed by” the phrase.⁵⁰ It also reduces Paul’s statement to the level of assertion, leaving unexplained how the law’s confining action leads to faith. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Paul’s audience seems unlikely to have read the εἰς in this way.

The Galatians would instead likely have read συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι as an instance of the common συγκλείω + εἰς construction.⁵¹ In such constructions, the prepositional phrase almost always has its typical locative force signifying the space into which an entity is being enclosed. This “space” could, of course, be a physical location,⁵² but it could also refer more metaphorically to any state, condition, or requirement that a person was forced to accept without recourse. Thus, for instance, the Psalms

object, it at least specifies a specific event, something τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι does not do.

48 Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 175: “in spite of his explanations, the Apostle leaves things rather ambiguous.”

49 For a telic εἰς, see Burton, *Galatians*, 199; Meyer, “Galatians,” 153.

50 Burton, *Galatians*, 199.

51 Meyer, “Galatians,” 153, attributes this view also to Hofman and Raphael. Meyer himself rejects this meaning on the grounds that it requires a different use of συγκλείω than in 3:22, a use that connotes being forced against one’s will. In and of itself, however, συγκλείω implies nothing about its objects’ desires; it speaks rather to their limited options.

52 E.g., Amos 1:6; 1 Macc 5:5; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.152; *B. J.* 1.65; 2.641; 3.538; 6.248; *A. J.* 7.129; Polybius, *Hist.* 3.117.11; 14.6.7; 38.2.8; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 11.15.3; 14.12.7; 17.25.6.

in the LXX speak of not being “delivered . . . into the hands of an enemy” (οὐ συνέκλεισάς με εἰς χειρὰς ἐχθροῦ, 30:9), of cattle being “consigned unto death” (εἰς θάνατον συνέκλεισεν, 77:50), and of people being “given over to the sword” (συνέκλεισεν εἰς ῥομφαίαν, 77:62). Moving to examples from the secular realm, the historian Polybius describes the Romans as “imposing hostages and tribute” (συγκλείσαντες εἰς ὄμηρα καὶ φόρους) on Philip (*Historiae* 21.11.9; cf. 15.20.7) and Philip himself as being “confined to the jurisdiction established by treaty” (συγκλεισθέντος εἰς τὴν κατὰ τὸ σύμβολον δικαιοδοσίαν, *Hist.* 23.1.2). Even Paul uses the construction with this sense in Rom 11:32—his only use of συγκλείω outside of Gal 3:22–23—when he states that “God consigned all people to disobedience” (συνέκλεισεν . . . ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθείαν) so that he might show mercy to all.

Read in this way, 3:23 portrays the law as driving the Jews “toward” or “into” the faith that was about to be revealed, a possibility that precludes the understanding of συγκλειόμενοι as an “enclosing” under law or sin. Not only does this reading make the best grammatical sense of the construction, it also suggests how a law given for the purpose of establishing transgressions (3:19) could work to support God’s promises (3:21), namely, by revealing the people’s sinfulness and forcing them to rely on faith rather than on their own righteousness. Indeed, 3:24 goes on to infer from this function of the law that the law has become the Jews’ παιδαγωγός “so that we might be justified based on faith” (ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν). Scripture’s enclosing (συνέκλεισεν, 3:22) of everyone under sin thus enables the law to compel (συγκλειόμενοι, 3:23) the Jews towards/into the coming faith, a faith that requires transgressing the law into Christ.

Paul’s use of συγκλείω in 3:23 accordingly does not highlight the purportedly troublesome restrictions imposed by the law but the direction and goal to which the law points; the law does not function as a jailor or protector so much as a shepherd or, appropriately, a παιδαγωγός. In the Greco-Roman world, a παιδαγωγός was typically a household slave or freedman entrusted with the oversight of the household’s children from the time of their emergence from a nanny (six or seven years old) up to late adolescence (sixteen to twenty years old). He would accompany the child(ren) everywhere, providing physical (and moral) protection as well as basic instruction. The primary task of a παιδαγωγός, however, was to oversee the moral and social development of his charges.⁵³ The standard interpretations of Gal 3:23–24 discussed above emphasize the restrictions imposed by a παιδαγωγός and the temporary nature

53 On the role of a παιδαγωγός, see Norman H. Young, “Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 150–76, 151–69.

of the role—legitimate parallels to be sure⁵⁴—but why these factors would imply (ὥστε, 3:24) that the law functions as a παιδαγωγός in particular and not some other entity that watches over its charges for a limited time remains unclear. In contrast, the presentation of the law as an entity seeking to instill the proper attitude of faith in its charges through the defining (and punishing) of transgressions fits well with the role of moral development specifically associated with a παιδαγωγός in the ancient world.

Paul further qualifies this identification of the law as a παιδαγωγός as being εἰς Χριστόν. Noting that a Greco-Roman παιδαγωγός was often responsible for taking his charges to school, Theodoret interpreted εἰς Χριστόν as a locative phrase indicative of the law's taking its charges "to Christ" their teacher.⁵⁵ Few today find this reading compelling: the context says nothing about Christ as a teacher, taking minors to school was a relatively minor duty of a παιδαγωγός, and the phrases πρὸς Χριστόν ("to Christ") or εἰς Χριστοῦ ("to [the school] of Christ") would have expressed this idea more clearly.⁵⁶ Scholars have also interpreted the phrase in a pregnant ("to bring forth Christ") or telic ("pointing to Christ") sense.⁵⁷ By far, however, most recent interpreters read εἰς Χριστόν as a temporal reference ("until Christ"), usually appealing to the parallel phrase εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι in 3:23 for support.⁵⁸ I have argued, however, that the εἰς in 3:23 has its customary locative sense. The parallel with 3:23 therefore suggests that the εἰς in 3:24 functions similarly, with the sense of συγκλείω being implied from the earlier instance. That is to say, the εἰς likely has a locative force in 3:24 as well, not in the sense of taking charges "to Christ" but, as in 3:23, in the sense of compelling the Jews "into Christ." Accordingly, when proving in 3:26–29 that the Jews are no longer under the law-παιδαγωγός, Paul focuses on the fact that the Jewish and gentile believers are all "in Christ Jesus" (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 3:26, 28; cf. εἰς Χριστόν ἐβαπτίσθητε, 3:27).

How does the law compel the Jews into Christ? The answer cannot be that the law compels by revealing the Jews' need for atonement: the law itself already had a sacrificial system to cover any sins they might commit. Rather, as suggested above, the law compels them into Christ by separating the Jews from the gentiles. It therefore forces them to unite with Christ to escape the law's curse and share in the Abrahamic blessing promised to the gentiles.

54 On these parallels, see *ibid.*, 170–75.

55 Theodoret, *Commentarius in omnes b. Pauli epistolas* (ed. C. Marriott; Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1852), 1:349.

56 So Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 149; Burton, *Galatians*, 200.

57 For the pregnant sense, see Burton, *Galatians*, 200; for the telic, Meyer, "Galatians," 154.

58 E.g., Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 199; Betz, *Galatians*, 178; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 148–49.

The law's promotion of faith through the revelation of transgressions, then, does not serve to convince the Jews of their need for an atoning savior. Instead, the knowledge that their justification rests on faith rather than law observance provides them with the confidence they need to die to the law and enter into Christ.

The law thus compels the Jews "into Christ" in both a physical and a qualitative sense. It pushes the Jews to unite with Christ (the physical sense), but the very act of entering into this union requires that they also become like Christ in their expression of faith (the qualitative sense). In accordance with its focus on the law's role of promoting faith, this passage emphasizes the latter aspect, as the parallel of εἰς Χριστόν with εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι in 3:23 shows: the "faith about to be revealed" is this "faith of Christ." Similarly, Paul can identify the law as a παιδαγωγός because of its primary role of inculcating a Christlike faith in its charges.

Finally, this analysis explains the chronological emphasis in the passage. Before Jesus completes his task of freeing those under law (3:13, 4:5), a Jew could not transgress the law and abandon its atoning mechanisms without receiving the transgression's due penalty. Accordingly, although qualitatively the same as Abraham's faith in God, the "faith of Christ" that enables the Jews to die to the law with relative impunity becomes a possibility only after his death and resurrection, hence the emphasis in 3:23–25 on the "arrival" of this faith. Furthermore, this faith finds its ultimate expression in a person's dying to the law. We can therefore understand Paul's claim in 3:25 that, faith having come, Christian Jews ("we") are no longer under the παιδαγωγός of the law. (That Paul has specifically *Christian* Jews in mind becomes apparent from the way his subsequent proof in 3:26–29 focuses on the status of Jews and gentiles in Christ.)

Gal 3:26–29

²⁶Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ²⁷ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστόν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστόν ἐνεδύσασθε. ^{28a}οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἔνι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ. ^bπάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ²⁹εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι.

²⁶For all of you are sons of God through faith [who are] in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ^{28a}There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, ^bfor all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are of Christ, then you are Abrahamic seed, heirs according to promise.

Paul supports his claim that Christian Jews are no longer under a παιδαγωγός in 3:26–29 (cf. γάρ, 3:26) with a two-part argument grounded in the dual sonship of the Abrahamic seed. Each part reflects a different aspect of this dual nature: the first (3:26–27) discusses divine sonship while the second (3:28–29) considers the ensuing Abrahamic implications. Each part also proceeds by moving from a general statement embracing “all [i.e., both Jew and gentile] of you” (3:26, 3:28b) to a proof (3:27) or inference (3:29) focused on gentile Christians in particular. In short, I suggest that the argument points to the gentiles’ status as sons of God in Christ (3:26–27) and their resulting inclusion in Abraham’s seed (3:28–29) as evidence that “there is neither Jew nor Greek” in Christ (3:28a). I will address the ways in which this conclusion supports the initial claim of the law’s obsolescence at the end of my analysis.

The proof (γάρ) begins with the statement in 3:26 that “all of you are sons of God through faith [who are] in Christ Jesus” (πάντες . . . υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Dunn argues that the switch to the second-person verb ἐστε contrasts “all you gentiles” with “we Jews” in 3:25.⁵⁹ Although switches from first to second person in Gal 3–4 do typically emphasize the predominantly gentile nature of Paul’s audience, the addition of the inclusive qualifier πάντες (“all”) suggests that he here broadens the scope of the second person to include both Jews and gentiles (cf. 3:28). Supporting the claim that “there is no more Jew and gentile in Christ” (3:28a), the parallel phrase “for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (πάντες γάρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) in 3:28b similarly points to this inclusive reading and makes it unlikely that Paul has introduced the πάντες in either case as a merely rhetorical flourish.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, I affirm Dunn’s emphasis on the gentiles in the sense that the ensuing argument shows their inclusion as sons of God in Christ to be the key focus in 3:26.

Since Paul hardly ever (if at all) uses the phrase πίστις ἐν to designate “faith in” someone or something,⁶¹ most scholars agree that Gal 3:26 does not

59 Dunn, *Galatians*, 201. Cf. Taylor, “Eschatological Interdependence,” 307; Witherington, *Grace*, 269; Betz, *Galatians*, 185.

60 So, e.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 242. Contra Martyn, *Galatians*—“There were no Jews in Paul’s Galatian churches” (16)—the logic of Gal 3:28 suggests that both Jews and gentiles compose the Galatian churches.

61 The only possible examples of a πίστις ἐν construction denoting “faith in” in the undisputed Pauline letters occur in Rom 3:25 (ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι) and here in Gal 3:26, both of which are usually understood as coordinate. Among the disputed Pauline letters, see Col 1:4 (τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); Eph 1:15 (πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ); 1 Tim 1:14 (μετὰ πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); 3:13 (ἐν πίστει τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); 2 Tim 1:13 (ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); 3:15 (διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Schlier, *Galater*, 171, argues that even these instances from

attribute the readers' divine sonship to "faith in Christ Jesus" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) but rather characterizes their divine status in two ways: they are all sons of God "through faith" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως) and "in Christ Jesus" (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).⁶² Of the two, their status "in Christ Jesus" forms the crux of Paul's argument: ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ occupies the clause's emphatic final position, and it is this aspect of the claim that Paul seeks to establish (γάρ) through the reference to being "baptized into Christ" in 3:27. Furthermore, the potential point of controversy appears to be the inclusion of the *gentile* sons of God with those "in Christ." Many interpreters come to this conclusion on the basis of the subsequent argument in 3:28–29. Even within 3:26–27, however, two factors point to a focus on gentiles in 3:27.

First, Paul switches from πάντες ("all") in 3:26 to ὅσοι ("as many as") in 3:27. While ὅσοι could simply function as a rhetorical equivalent for πάντες,⁶³ it could alternatively distinguish a group of Paul's audience from among the "all of you" in 3:26. Interpreters rarely acknowledge this possibility because it would imply that not all of the "sons of God in Christ Jesus" in 3:26 were "baptized into Christ."⁶⁴ After all, how could someone be a son of God in Christ if they were not, in fact, baptized into Christ? In truth, scholars already acknowledge a presumably sizable group of believers whose status "in Christ" stands beyond question yet who were never baptized into Christ, namely, those Jewish disciples—including the Twelve—who had already received John's baptism of repentance.⁶⁵ Paul could accordingly use ὅσοι to account for the possibility that some of these Jewish believers had made their way to Galatia.⁶⁶ If the ὅσοι serves this purpose, then the inherent recognition that at least some Jewish

the disputed Pauline letters speak of Christ as the basis ("Fundament")—not the object—of faith.

- 62 See, e.g., R. Barry Matlock, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Galatians 3:26: Neglected Evidence for 'Faith in Christ'?", *NTS* 49 (2003): 433–39, 436–37. Contra Lagrange, *Galates*, 92; Sieffert, *Galater*, 226–27.
- 63 So, e.g., Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 221.
- 64 Dunn, *Galatians*, 202, acknowledges the division inherent in ὅσοι but attributes it to Paul's allowing for the possibility of visitors. This suggestion seems unlikely given that the corresponding πάντες in 3:26 makes no such allowances.
- 65 Acts 19:1–7 records the only known instance where those who received John's baptism were rebaptized into the name of Christ.
- 66 The many references to the Christian baptism of Jews elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Acts 2:38, 9:18) make it less likely that the ὅσοι reflects a more general Pauline practice of not baptizing Jews into Christ. Indeed, if the Crispus whom Paul claims to have baptized in 1 Cor 1:14 is the same Crispus who led the synagogue according to Acts 18:8, then we have firsthand evidence for Paul's baptism of Jews.

believers had never been baptized into Christ would imply that 3:27 primarily establishes that the gentile “sons of God” in Paul’s audience have indeed “put on Christ.”

As an aside, I note that the existence of Jews who have united with Christ apart from baptism suggests that, in contrast to its function for gentiles, baptism does not unite Jews with Christ. Although the complexity of this issue precludes a thorough study here, this suggestion does accord well with the evidence in Galatians. After all, Paul has just argued in 3:24 that the law compels the Jews “into Christ” (εἰς Χριστόν; cf. 3:27), a union that, given the emphasis in 3:23–24 on the law’s role of promoting faith, seems to occur through faith (cf. the parallel εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι in 3:23). He has also made this point explicitly in 2:15–16 when, after distinguishing himself and Peter as “Jews by nature and not sinners from among the gentiles,” Paul claims that “we believed into Christ Jesus” (ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν).⁶⁷ This analysis then produces a rather compelling symmetry. Gentiles who receive the Spirit that makes them sons of God through faith alone (cf. 3:1–5) require integration into Christ through the physical act of baptism in order to become sons of Abraham. Jews who become sons of Abraham through biological descent and the physical act of circumcision require integration into Christ through faith in order to receive the Spirit and become sons of God. In other words, whether Jews or gentiles, people become sons of God through faith and sons of Abraham through a physical act.⁶⁸

67 Williams, “*Pistis*,” 443.

68 This analysis also explains the paralleling of baptism with the physical act of circumcision in Col 2:11–12. I disagree with James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 109–13, and Debbie Hunn, “The Baptism of Galatians 3:27: A Contextual Approach,” *ExpTim* 115 (2004): 372–75, both of whom suggest that 3:27 describes a spiritual baptism instead of the water rite. Dunn’s suggestion that water baptism would ill fit an argument contrasting sonship κατὰ σάρκα and sonship κατὰ πνεῦμα unhelpfully conflates divine sonship here with the subsequent discussion of Abrahamic sonship in 4:21–5:1. His claim that Paul contrasts circumcision with faith rather than with another rite similarly conflates and confuses various issues, as does Hunn’s identification of this baptism with the sending of the Spirit in 4:5–6 (on which, see pp. 230–46 below). Hunn also misunderstands the logic of 3:27, suggesting that Paul invokes baptism “to validate God’s acceptance of both Jew and Gentile as sons” (374) rather than to establish the unity of Jew and gentile in Christ (cf. 3:28). In short, once we acknowledge the dual sonship of the Abrahamic seed, nothing in the context of 3:27 points the Galatians away from the straightforward understanding of βαπτίζω as a reference to their water baptism (cf., e.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 185).

The second factor suggesting that 3:26–27 focuses on proving the gentiles' status in Christ is the nature of the Abrahamic seed's dual sonship. As Paul claims in 3:26, both Jews and gentiles—"all of you"—become sons of God through faith, and both end up in Christ. Only Jews, however, require integration into Christ to attain their status as sons of God: they require this union to escape the curse of the law and receive the Spirit of sonship that comes to the gentiles as the Abrahamic blessing. Gentiles, in contrast, receive this blessing simply through "the hearing of faith" (3:2–5). It is therefore his inclusion of the gentile sons of God in Christ Jesus that requires explanation and presumably proves his previous point that Christian Jews are no longer under the pedagogue of the law (3:25). To understand exactly how the gentiles' inclusion makes this point, we must press on to the second step in Paul's argument, 3:28–29.

Galatians 3:28 opens with a series of negated parallels: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female."⁶⁹ As Wayne Meeks notes, the opposition of such social roles was a "rhetorical commonplace."⁷⁰ Ancient writers attribute to Thales, Socrates, and Plato expressions of thanksgiving for being born a human and not a beast, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a barbarian. Similarly, morning prayers variously attributed to second century CE rabbis Judah b. Elai and Meir thank God for not being born a gentile, a female, or a brute.⁷¹ Rather than providing direct

69 Given the common abbreviation of ἔνεστι / ἐνεστι as ἐνι (see LSJ, "ἐνεῖμι," 562), it seems unlikely that ἐνι in 3:28a functions as a poetic / stronger form of the preposition ἐν with a shifted accent (normally, ἐνί). See Meyer, "Galatians," 157. As Burton, *Galatians*, 207, notes in arguing for the prepositional form, however, this form would still require a reader to supply εἰμί and would thus effectively yield the same sense as an instance of ἐνεῖμι, which always incorporates the sense of its prefix ἐν in some way. (Bruce, *Galatians*, 186, provides no evidence for his claim that ἐνι here functions instead as "an emphatic equivalent of ἐστίν.") The word could therefore signify either "to be in" (BDAG, "ἐνεῖμι," 334, meaning 1 / LSJ, meaning 1) or "to be within the limits of realization," i.e., "to be possible" (BDAG, meaning 2 / LSJ, meaning 11). In the former case, 3:28a would deny a fact ("there is no"); in the latter, the very possibility ("there can be no"). Since 3:28b accounts for the prefixed form by limiting the applicability of the claims in 3:28a to those "in Christ Jesus" (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), I see no compelling reason to push beyond a straightforward statement of fact. So most interpreters, e.g., Burton, *Galatians*, 207; Martyn, *Galatians*, 376 n. 252; Meyer, "Galatians," 157. Contra Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 97; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 150.

70 Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *HR* 13 (1974): 165–208, 167.

71 For Thales and Socrates, see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.33. For Plato, see Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 3.19; cf. Plutarch, *Marius* 46.1. For R. Judah b. Elai,

background for Paul's claim, these texts help establish a cultural milieu in which the Galatians would have been likely to understand the three antithetical pairs as signifying, in the words of Dunn, the "most profound and obvious differences in the ancient world."⁷²

Given the rhythmic structure, the existence of similar baptismal passages in other Pauline letters (1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11), and the apparent contextual relevance of only the Jew/Greek pairing,⁷³ many interpreters propose that Paul here cites and/or modifies part of a traditional baptismal liturgy.⁷⁴ I find this suggestion unpersuasive,⁷⁵ but even if 3:28 does cite a baptismal liturgy, the fact that—among other situational differences—neither 1 Cor 12:13 nor Col 3:11 mentions the male/female pairing suggests that all three antithetical pairs in Gal 3:28 have significance for the argument in Galatians.⁷⁶ Indeed, I will argue

see *t. Ber.* 7:18 and *y. Ber.* 13b. For R. Meir, see *b. Menah.* 43b, although R. Judah also appears in several mss. of *b. Menah.* 43b. For other instances, see Rastoin, *Tarse*, 229.

72 Dunn, *Galatians*, 206.

73 "Greek" ("Ἕλλην") likely acknowledges the Galatians' self-identification, whereas "gentile" (ἔθνος) would presuppose a Jewish view (cf. 2:15). The Jew/Greek contrast appears to be a fairly standard formula for Paul, also appearing in Rom 1:16; 2:9–10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; and Col 3:11. A Jew/gentile contrast appears only in Rom 3:29; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 2:14–15; 1 Thess 2:14–16. Cf. Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 59.

74 E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 245–47; Meeks, "Androgyne," 180–82; Martyn, *Galatians*, 378–83; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156–57; Betz, *Galatians*, 181–85. Dunn, *Galatians*, 201, rightly cautions that the parallels could simply indicate a Pauline theme.

75 For critique of the baptismal liturgy hypothesis, see Bernard C. Lategan, "Reconsidering the Origin and Function of Galatians 3:28," *Neot* 46 (2012): 274–86. Among other points, he notes the absence of any sacramental terminology, appeal to communal memory (contra 1 Cor 11:23), or even other references to the, in this reading, all-important ritual of baptism (275).

76 Troy W. Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28," *JBL* 122 (2003): 111–25, 121, suggests that all three pairs reflect the circumcision covenant in Gen 17:9–14, with the first member of each pair (Jew, slave, male) requiring circumcision and the second member (Greek, free, female) remaining uncircumcised. To make this analysis work, he interprets the slave/free pairing as describing foreigners living amongst Abraham's descendants (117–18). Martin then proposes that Paul's argument concerns the initial requirements for entering the people of God: in contrast to circumcision, baptism represents an option open to all (121). Paul, however, associates the state of affairs in 3:28a with the believers' postbaptismal status in Christ (3:27, 28b), not their prebaptismal qualifications for entering into the people of God. That Paul would have expected the Galatians to detect such a subtle allusion to Gen 17 also seems unlikely, especially given the rather obscure interpretation of the slave/free pairing. Martin argues that the agitators would have made these categories clear (120), but Paul nowhere exhibits such a detailed awareness of the agitators' appeal, and when he

below that Paul understands these antithetical pairs as “the elements composing the world of humanity” (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, 4:3), i.e., as enslaving divisions that Christ ultimately enables the believers to transcend.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the present point in the argument does focus on the Jew/gentile distinction; the other pairs function more proleptically to locate this initial distinction firmly within the realm of fallen Adamic humanity.⁷⁸ I will accordingly focus on the Jew/Greek contrast in analyzing 3:28–29 and then return to these pairs in the analysis of 4:1–7.

The asyndeton in 3:28a suggests that the claim “there is neither Jew nor Greek” summarizes the significance of Paul’s argument in 3:26–27. In other words, he seems to prove that Christian Jews are no longer under the law (3:25) by showing that they stand in the same position as the not-under-law gentiles. Galatians 3:26–27 has established this standing with regard to their mutual status as sons of God. Jews, however, could still potentially argue for the law’s—and circumcision’s—importance to their Abrahamic sonship. Accordingly, to complete the argument, Paul has to show in 3:28b–29 that the gentiles’ status in Christ suffices to make them sons—and, thus, seed—of Abraham.

Paul grounds (γάρ) his statement that there is neither Jew nor Greek in the claim that “all of you are one [εἷς] in Christ Jesus” (3:28b).⁷⁹ As Burton notes, the εἷς could function either “distributively and qualitatively” or “inclusively and

does address their appeal in 6:12–14, he implies that they advocate circumcision based on law observance rather than Abraham.

77 See pp. 236–43.

78 The third pair breaks from the “neither . . . nor” (οὐκ . . . οὐδέ) pattern of the first two, stating instead that “there is not male *and* female” (οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ). Many scholars view this shift as alluding to the creation of Adam and Eve in Gen 1:27: “male and female he made them” (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς). See Hays, “Galatians,” 273; Martyn, *Galatians*, 376–77. This reference to the original creation effectively implies that circumcision as a distinguishing factor presupposes the underlying Adamic unity of humanity, a unity that scripture has enclosed entirely under sin (Gal 3:22). Because it presupposes this unity, however, neither circumcision nor the law of which it is a part could ever enable the Jews to transcend their fallen human nature; circumcision can differentiate, but it cannot transform. As a result, although being a Jew, or free, or male might entail advantages in this created world, none of these designations—or their counterparts—could ever provide the only benefit that ultimately matters, namely, life (3:21). Indeed, only Christ, who enters humanity from the outside (cf. “God sent forth his son,” 4:4) and who, as 3:28a suggests and the discussion of 4:1–7 below will argue, ultimately transcends humanity’s various subdivisions, can offer freedom from the Adamic curse (cf. 6:15).

79 The suggestion of Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158, that the γάρ in 3:28b refers back to 3:26 overlooks the more straightforward connection to 3:28a and essentially leaves the asyndetic 3:28a without any connections to the surrounding argument.

numerically.”⁸⁰ These two functions, however, lead to respective arguments that fundamentally differ with regard to emphasis and the manner of supporting 3:28a. In the former case, “oneness” would signify the *equality/sameness* of individual Jews and gentiles in Christ. This option would accordingly support 3:28a by emphasizing the negation of differences inherent to human particularity—whether absolutely,⁸¹ from a particular perspective,⁸² or with respect to a particular aspect⁸³—that results from an individual’s relationship to Christ. In the latter case, “oneness” would signify the corporate *union* of Jew and gentile in Christ. This option would accordingly support 3:28a by emphasizing the status of Jews and gentiles as part of the corporate entity that is Christ.

The differing ways that εἷς functions in these arguments prevent us from simply combining the two meanings. Admittedly, some interpreters understand 3:28b to derive the Christians’ equality from their incorporation into the one Christ. This combined sense, however, does not proceed from the εἷς alone: such an interpretation effectively treats the εἷς as distributive while inferring—whether explicitly or not—the incorporated unity from the designation “in Christ.”⁸⁴ In contrast, an inclusive/numerical reading of the εἷς would have no reason to negate the various distinctions of human particularity.⁸⁵

How, then, should we interpret the εἷς? Three factors suggest that we should prefer the inclusive, numerical reading. First, 1 Cor 12:13–14 employs a similar set of binary oppositions to portray Jews, gentiles, slaves and free as distinct

80 Burton, *Galatians*, 207–8.

81 Grounding Paul’s argument in “a general Hellenistic longing for the univocal and the universal” Boyarin, *Radical*, 24–25, reads 3:28 as the actual “erasure” of differences in the spirit body of Christ. Cf. Meeks, “Androgyne,” 165–208.

82 Burton, *Galatians*, 207, suggests that a distributive view of 3:28b would reflect the way that God views those in Christ, i.e., God shows no partiality or preference.

83 Focusing on the parallel of “one” in 3:28b with “sons of God” in 3:27, Campbell, *Quest*, 99, argues that 3:28 points simply to “the uniform [i.e., one and the same] but personal and pluralized condition of ‘sonship.’”

84 E.g., Hays, “Galatians,” 272–73.

85 Contra Martyn, *Galatians*, 377, who suggests that “[Paul] had later, therefore, to think very seriously about the tension between the affirmation of *real unity in Christ* and the *disconcerting continuation of distinguishing marks* of the old creation” (emphasis added). Or again, Fung, *Galatians*, 175–76, argues forcefully for an emphasis on numerical unity, yet he explains 3:28a as the “cover[ing] up” of “distinctions which obtained before.” These interpretations both slide, perhaps unconsciously, from the distinct concept of numerical “unity” with regard to Abraham’s seed to an understanding of qualitative “unity” with regard to the relationship between Jew and gentile.

members of a single body, a fairly common image in the Pauline literature.⁸⁶ As Douglas Campbell notes, this parallel hardly proves decisive since Gal 3:28 lacks any explicit references to Christ's body.⁸⁷ It does, however, establish a clear instance of the model that results from reading the binary oppositions in 3:28a with an inclusive εἷς in 3:28b. Against the more extreme versions of a distributive reading, it also shows that Paul does not associate incorporation into Christ with the negation of all particularity.

Second, a distributive reading would essentially undercut the vehemence of Paul's argument that the gentile Galatians not take up the law. True, Judaizing gentiles would be attributing significance to something that truly has no significance in Christ, but such an error would hardly seem worthy of characterization as "falling from grace" and being "severed from Christ" (5:4). What would differentiate this type of error, e.g., from the countenanced error of those "weak" Christians who refuse to eat certain foods despite the fact that what they eat has no effect on their standing before God (1 Cor 8:8; cf. Rom 14:2–3)? In other words, Paul's emphatic insistence that gentiles not become Jews suggests an argument in which human distinctions retain a primary significance. While we might attribute this difficulty to Paul's overstating his case here in Galatians, we should prefer an interpretation that appropriately matches the severity of his concern.

Finally and most importantly, an inclusive, numerical reading of εἷς does something that a distributive, qualitative reading cannot do, namely, explain how the identification of a plurality of believers with Abraham's seed in 3:29 coheres with Paul's earlier insistence on the singular nature of that seed in 3:16. In short, he can associate the plurality of Galatian Christians with the singular Abrahamic seed because they are all "one" in Christ, i.e., a single entity.⁸⁸ This reading thus enables a coherent interpretation of Paul's seed argument. It also accords with the consistent linking of a numerical εἷς with Abraham's seed in this passage (3:16, 19–20).

The evidence thus points strongly toward the inclusive, numerical reading of the εἷς.⁸⁹ Viewed in this way, 3:28 focuses attention on the whole (Christ) rather than on the constituent parts (Jew/gentile, slave/free, male/female).

86 Cf. Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 6:15–17; 10:17; 12:12–20; Col 3:15; Eph 4:4–16.

87 Campbell, *Quest*, 99. Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 224, argues that ἐν σῶμα (1 Cor 12:12–13, 20; Rom 12:5) stresses unity whereas εἷς (Gal 3:28) stresses equality. As I will show in the main text above, this analysis overlooks the importance of εἷς in Galatians as a pointer to Abraham's one seed.

88 Betz, *Galatians*, 200–201.

89 So Matera, *Galatians*, 143; Fung, *Galatians*, 176; Bruce, *Galatians*, 190.

It does not, however, thereby seek to homogenize the various parts.⁹⁰ Indeed, far from negating their differences, Paul's underlying framework validates and celebrates them by situating them in their proper context as parts of the nature of Christ. Thus, James Dunn, e.g., argues that

[in light of 1 Cor 12:13–14,] the character of the 'oneness' becomes clearer: not as a levelling and abolishing of all racial, social or gender differences, but as an integration of just such differences into common participation 'in Christ', wherein they enhance (rather than detract from) the unity of the body, and enrich the mutual interdependence and service of its members.⁹¹

In other words, "there is neither Jew nor Greek" not because Christ eliminates such particularities but because he transcends them, placing them within a larger whole. Just as male and female unite to form "one flesh," so, too, Jews and Greeks unite in Christ to form one body (Gen 2:24; cf. the slightly different application of this principle in Eph 5:30–32).

Galatians 3:29 then draws the pertinent implication of this oneness for the current situation: the gentile Galatians who are "of Christ" share in the Jews' Abrahamic sonship and thus qualify as Abrahamic seed. Several aspects of this interpretation require explanation. For instance, Gal 3:29 nowhere mentions gentiles. Nevertheless, the resumption of Paul's unmodified second-person pronoun *ὑμεῖς*—which at the very least includes gentiles—suggests that the statement focuses on gentiles. The concluding description of the Galatians as heirs "according to promise" (*κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν*) also likely refers to their gentile-specific status as Abraham's "children of promise" (*ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα*, 4:28), a designation that I will explore in Part III. Furthermore, the very act of arguing for a link to Abraham—the *τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα* construction emphasizes the Abrahamic nature of the seed rather than the type of relationship (seed) to

90 This interpretation of the *εἶς* thus has no problem with the observation that distinctions between Jew and gentile, between slave and free, and between male and female continue to exist even in the church. Other explanations for this disjunction between social reality and the claim in Gal 3:28a argue, e.g., that 3:28a asserts 1) only the basis for God's acceptance (e.g., Burton, *Galatians*, 206); 2) only that those in Christ all share one and the same divine sonship (Campbell, *Quest*, 99); 3) a not-yet-fully-realized eschatological ideal (e.g., Hays, "Galatians," 272–73; Meeks, "Androgyne," 207–8); or 4) a radical position from which Paul later retreats (Betz, *Galatians*, 200).

91 Dunn, *Galatians*, 208. Cf. Martin, "Covenant," 121, who similarly understands unity in Christ although he does not connect this understanding to the antithetical pairs in 3:28a.

Abraham⁹²—indicates a gentile focus: while Jews who are “of Christ” would also qualify as Abraham’s seed, it is the gentiles’ connection to Abraham that demands explanation.

Paul explains this connection on the grounds that the gentiles (“you”) are “of Christ” (Χριστοῦ).⁹³ The switch to the genitive Χριστοῦ after the repeated emphasis in the preceding verses on being “in Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 3:26, 28; cf. εἰς Χριστόν, 3:27) also requires comment. Scholars typically interpret the genitive as possessive or attributive, i.e., as in some way indicating those who “belong to Christ.”⁹⁴ The interpretation of εἰς in 3:28b as inclusive and numerical, however, suggests that Χριστοῦ instead functions as a common partitive genitive. In other words, I suggest that the gentile Galatians’ “of Christ” status rests not just on their being “in Christ Jesus” but on their being a constitutive part of this “one [entity] in Christ Jesus” that they form with the Jewish believers (cf. “all of you,” 3:28b).

This analysis then leads to Burton’s critical question as to whether or not the Galatians’ status as Abrahamic seed in 3:29 derives from Christ’s status as the single seed.⁹⁵ Most scholars assume that it does: distributive readings of the εἰς already emphasize a believer’s individual connection with Christ, and even inclusive readings can argue that the gentiles become Abrahamic seed because they are “in” the single seed.⁹⁶ This explanation would make sense if Jesus’ status as the seed resulted from some intrinsic necessity or arbitrary divine election. Conversely, I have argued that Paul provides a rationale for his identification of Christ as the single seed, namely, that Jesus is a son of both God and Abraham. This rationale then raises the possibility that the Galatians qualify as seed for the same reason. In this latter scenario, it is not union with Christ *per se* that would make the Galatians Abrahamic seed but rather their newfound status in Christ as sons of both God and Abraham. Discerning which scenario correctly reflects Paul’s view has important implications for our understanding of Abraham’s seed and, thus, the overall argument.

92 Burton, *Galatians*, 209, notes that the anarthrous σπέρμα could serve either to indicate that the Galatians are included in—as opposed to constitute—Abraham’s seed or it could simply ascribe seed status to them. The analysis above favors the former option.

93 The first class conditional structure assumes the truth of the protasis. The δέ suggests that it represents a further implication of the preceding claim that they are all one in Christ Jesus.

94 Moo, *Galatians*, 255; Hays, “Galatians,” 273; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 225; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158; Burton, *Galatians*, 209.

95 Burton, *Galatians*, 210.

96 Kwon, *Eschatology*, 127; Hays, “Galatians,” 273; Martyn, *Galatians*, 377; Matera, *Galatians*, 147; Fung, *Galatians*, 176; Bruce, *Galatians*, 190–91.

In deciding between these two options, I suggest that the εἷς in 3:29 proves determinative. As discussed above, Paul grounds the Galatians' status as Abrahamic seed in the fact that they are "of Christ" (Χριστοῦ), that is to say, that "all of you"—i.e., Jew and gentile together—form a single entity (εἷς) in Christ Jesus. Significantly, he does not claim that his readers are "united with" this one or that they are simply "located within" this one. Instead, he identifies the readers as themselves constitutive of this "one" (πάντες . . . ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστέ), a term that the argument relates to Abraham's seed in both of its other instances (3:16, 20). In other words, Paul suggests that their corporate union in—not with—Christ, i.e., the union of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God, qualifies them together as Abraham's seed.

This understanding of the "oneness" of Abraham's seed accordingly points to the interdependence of Jews and gentiles in Christ. Jews and gentiles do not form a loose confederation of individuals connected by a common relationship to Christ. Rather, as Paul says in Rom 12:5, "we who are many are one body in Christ *and each members of one another* [τὸ δὲ καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη]." Gentiles share in the physical Abrahamic sonship of their Jewish counterparts in Christ. (This interpretation thus requires the retaining of human particularity in Christ.) Similarly, as Paul will claim in 4:6, the Spirit of divine adoption flows into the Jewish Christians' ("our") hearts because the gentiles ("you") are sons of God.⁹⁷ The physical sons of Abraham and the spiritual sons of God must unite to become the Abrahamic seed. Each needs the other to be complete.

This argument also suggests a distinction between Christ's being in believers and believers' being in Christ. Paul relates the former to the reception of the Spirit that transforms believers into individual sons of God through *faith*, hence, the "blessing in Christ" that comes "*into* the gentiles" (εἰς τὰ ἔθνη) in 3:14a (cf. 3:1–5) and the "Spirit of [God's] son" that comes "*into* our hearts" (εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν) in 4:6. The latter he relates to the Galatians' incorporation into the Abrahamic seed through *baptism* in 3:27–29. (Significantly, this distinction further indicates that adoption as sons of God does not result from baptism but from the reception of the Spirit through faith alone.⁹⁸) Thus, while there

97 See pp. 243–46. This analysis implies that Jews and gentiles require integration into Christ for different reasons. Jews require it in order to escape the curse that enables them to receive the blessing of the Spirit as gentiles; gentiles require it in order to share in the Jews' physical descent from Abraham.

98 Contra Betz, *Galatians*, 209; Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 76. Betz even notes that Paul's argument in Galatians strictly distinguishes between baptism and reception of the Spirit, never referring to one when discussing the other. He cannot explain this disjunction, suggesting only that the concept of "sonship" functions as "some kind of link[!]" between

are potentially many sons of God with Christ in them, there is only one seed of Abraham composed of believers in Christ. One could therefore conceivably be a gentile son of God through the indwelling Spirit and yet not be part of the Abrahamic seed, just as one could be a physical son of Abraham and yet not be part of the Abrahamic seed.

Not only does this proposed “oneness” of Jew and gentile in Christ maintain the integrity of Paul’s argument in 3:16, but it also resolves two other outstanding issues. First, it explains the identification of Abraham’s single seed with a plurality of believers in a way that distinguishes Christ from Moses. Christ simply does not mediate the promises to many individual recipients in the same way that Moses mediates the law in 3:19–20. Instead, believers who enter into Christ become an integral part of the single entity to whom the promise was made.

Second, this understanding of Abraham’s seed explains the vehemence of Paul’s rhetoric. If Jew and gentile together constitute the seed in such a way that human particularity still matters, then defections have significant implications for the larger body of Christ. As Paul says in 1 Cor 12:19, “if everything was one part, where would the body be?” Jews cannot be the seed of Abraham without gentiles and vice versa since each represents a vital part of the seed’s nature. The body of Christ needs the diversity of its members.

The way that the inclusion of gentiles in Abraham’s seed supports Paul’s initial claim that Jewish Christians are no longer under law illustrates this point well. As most interpreters note, the fact that, in Christ, gentiles who are not under law now share the same status as Jews undermines any insistence on the law’s necessity. The significance of their inclusion goes beyond a simple inductive appeal, however: it also supplies a rationale for the law’s end. Paul has argued in 3:23–24 that the purpose of the law was to promote faith among the Jews, to remind them that they must rely on their faith in God for righteousness rather than on their works. The inclusion of gentiles in Abraham’s seed renders this function of the law obsolete. Jews in Christ now have a new reminder of the sufficiency and necessity of faith, namely, their gentile brothers and sisters who have been incorporated into the seed based purely on faith and mercy (cf. Rom 11:30–31; 15:8–9). The urgency with which Paul insists that gentiles not Judaize thus reflects a concern for the Jews as well as the gentiles in Christ. At the same time, it also reflects a concern for those still outside the

baptism and the gift of the Spirit.” My explanation above accounts for the disjunction as well as eliminating the tension between the purported need for baptism and Paul’s implied claim in 3:1–5 that the Galatians received the Spirit “based on hearing with faith” (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως).

body since the fullest expression of Christ on earth can occur only when those who reflect the different aspects of his nature unite together under his name and authority.

In summary, then, Gal 3:26–29 supports Paul's claim in 3:25 that Jewish Christians are no longer under law by arguing that, by virtue of their corporate union in Christ, the gentile Christians share in their Jewish counterparts' nature as physical sons of Abraham even as the Jewish Christians share in the gentiles' blessing that makes them sons of God. This corporate entity thus qualifies as Abraham's seed, a conclusion that coheres with Paul's earlier argument for a singular seed in 3:16. The gentiles' inclusion in this seed then demonstrates the irrelevance of law observance to such status and, in fact, renders the law obsolete by serving as a constant reminder of the ultimate priority of faith.

*The Law as Promoter of Christ / Implications for Gentiles of Jews'
Becoming Sons of God in Christ (4:1–11)*

Galatians 4:1–11 essentially flips the argument of Gal 3:23–29, both structurally and thematically. The earlier passage begins in 3:23–25 with a discussion of the Jews' relationship to the law. Galatians 3:26–29 then establishes the gentiles' status in Christ and their resulting connection to Abraham in order to prove the Jewish Christians' freedom from the law. Galatians 4:1–7 now reverses that argument, establishing the Jews' status as sons of God in Christ in order to prove the gentile Christians' divine sonship and freedom from their slavery to the στοιχεῖα. The passage then concludes in 4:8–11 by explicitly identifying the implications of this argument for the gentile Galatians' relationship to the law.

Gal 4:1–5

¹Λέγω δέ, ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ὁ κληρονόμος νήπιός ἐστιν, οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου κύριος πάντων ὢν, ²ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ἐστὶν καὶ οἰκονόμους ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρὸς. ³οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι. ⁴ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον, ⁵ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν.

¹But I say, as long as an heir is a child, he is no different from a slave—despite being lord of all—²but he is under guardians and stewards until the time set by the father. ³So also we, when we were children, we were enslaved under the elements of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his son, born from a woman, born under law, ⁵so that he might purchase those under law, so that we might receive the adoption.

The passage opens in 4:1–5 by presenting the situation of a minor heir awaiting his inheritance as an illuminating parallel for understanding the situation of the Jews prior to Christ's arrival. Paul establishes four main points of comparison:

4:1–2	ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ὁ κληρονόμος νήπιός ἐστιν	οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου κύριος πάντων ὧν	ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ἐστὶν καὶ οἰκονόμους	ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός
4:3–5	ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι	ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι	ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου	ὅτε ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου

The general principle in 4:1–2 seems to envision a scenario in which a deceased father has—presumably through a διαθήκη—entrusted his young son to the care of guardians until the age when, in the father's predeath estimation, the son would be mature enough to take ownership of his inheritance.⁹⁹ Interpreters typically identify two main tensions between this scenario and its application in 4:3–5.¹⁰⁰ First, a deceased father makes a rather awkward parallel for the living God in 4:3–5. Second, the scenario in 4:1–2 clearly focuses on the situation of a minor *heir* whose emergence from under his guardians at “the time set by the father” presumably corresponds to the reception of his inheritance. At the corresponding “fullness of time,” however, “we” receive adoption as sons of God (4:5). The parallels thus suggest that adoption constitutes “our” inheritance. Given 1) that the “father” language and need for guardians in 4:1–2 presume the heir's status as a son, 2) that Paul subsequently argues from sonship to heirship in 4:7, and 3) that there would be no reason to delay until the age of majority the adoption of someone who was already an heir, it seems unlikely that 4:3–5 envisions an heir who is not also a son. If “we” were not sons of God before the fullness of time, however, then how do “we” inherit?

Interpreters usually address the first problem either by arguing that 4:1–2 does not presume the father's death or by dismissing the problem (whether implicitly or explicitly) on the grounds that an analogy need not correspond at every point.¹⁰¹ Against the former suggestion, the language of heirs and

99 E.g., Oepke, *Galater*, 127.

100 On these problems, see Scott, *Adoption*, 122–26.

101 For a still-living father, see Meyer, “Galatians,” 165; Brown, *Galatians*, 185. Burton, *Galatians*, 214, suggests that the father is alive but traveling and, thus, absent. For an incomplete analogy, see Ellicott, *Galatians*, 91, who simply dismisses the issue as irrelevant to Paul's point about minority.

guardians most naturally indicates a situation where the father has died; only the subsequent parallel of the father with God could prompt the conclusion that 4:1–2 depicts the heir of a still-living father. The general principle in 4:1–2 would therefore be misleading at best if Paul intended to portray a scenario in which the father still lives, a misdirection that would serve no real purpose in the argument and that would have been easy to anticipate and avoid. The latter suggestion, in contrast, does offer a potentially viable solution, although I will ultimately argue for a more comprehensive resolution.

The second difficulty proves much harder to resolve. Some scholars try to preserve the analogy by arguing that υἰοθεσία means “full sonship”—i.e., in contrast to the status of a minor son—instead of “adoption”¹⁰² or that the divine framework of the application—in contrast to the human framework of the illustration—requires the additional step of adoption.¹⁰³ The former option falters because υἰοθεσία elsewhere always means “adoption,”¹⁰⁴ whereas the latter fails to address the key problem that the need for adoption destroys the parallel with the son/heir in the illustration. Other explanations try to justify the breakdown of Paul’s analogy. Thus, Franz Mußner, acknowledging that “we” are not yet sons and heirs in 4:3–5, argues that the analogy primarily highlights the time of slavery.¹⁰⁵ Or again, Frank Matera suggests that the reception of adoption breaks from the analogy because it shifts the focus from Jews in 4:3–5a to gentiles in 4:5b.¹⁰⁶ The focus on an heir in 4:1–2 and the integral importance of inheritance throughout 3:15–4:11 (esp. 3:29, 4:7), however, make it inconceivable that Paul would not expect his readers to understand the “so also we” in 4:3 as indicating that “we” were heirs as well as νήπιοι; at the time set by the father, the same “we” should therefore receive (cf. ἀπολλάβωμεν, 4:5b) not only a release from slavery (cf. 4:5a) but also an inheritance.

A simple solution resolves both problems: God is not the father from whom “we” inherit in 4:3–5. Although few interpreters even mention this possibility, its viability arises from the observation that Paul has had two distinct sonships—Abrahamic and divine—in view throughout 3:15–4:11. Since “we”

102 Brown, *Galatians*, 191–92; Byrne, *Sons*, 80, 183–85; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172. Cf. NIV: “full rights of sons.” Hahn, *Kinship*, 269–72, also invokes this reading, somehow discerning three stages in 4:1–7 (infant [?], child/slave, son/heir), which he correlates to the three covenant types (kinship, vassalage, grant) through which both Abraham (Gen 15, 17, 22) and Israel (Sinaitic, postcalf/Deuteronomic, New) progress.

103 Meyer, “Galatians,” 173.

104 Scott, *Adoption*, 2–57, 267.

105 Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 268. Cf. Tolmie, *Persuading*, 146–48; Martyn, *Galatians*, 391; Williams, *Galatians*, 108; Byrne, *Sons*, 176.

106 Matera, *Galatians*, 156. Cf. Hays, “Galatians,” 284.

were not sons (or heirs) of God before the fullness of time, “we” must be the sons and heirs of Abraham (cf. 3:29), a reading that necessarily restricts Paul’s first-person plural references to Jews.¹⁰⁷ Adoption as sons of God then becomes part of the Jews’ inheritance from Abraham, the deceased father of the Jews who parallels the deceased father in 4:1–2.

This interpretation also makes sense of the slavery parallel. Paul states that a minor heir is no different from a slave even though he is lord of all (4:1). The principle thus distinguishes two groups, true slaves and temporarily enslaved son-heirs. When applying the analogy, Paul claims that “we” were similarly enslaved by the *στοιχεῖα* (4:3). Since “we” are heirs, the parallel suggests that “we” should be distinguished from true slaves. Furthermore, Paul’s conclusion in 4:7 that his gentile readers are “no longer” (*οὐκέτι*) slaves but (now) sons suggests that they formerly were true slaves, a condition to which 4:9 attests. The components all fall into place if Paul’s “we” comprises Jews: even though they were heirs of the world according to the promise to Abraham (cf. Rom 4:13), before Christ—i.e., during the time of their minority—they were no different from the *στοιχεῖα*-enslaved gentiles.

Of course, the final aspect of the analogy does point to God as father: Paul claims that the heir emerges “at the time set by the father,” and it is clearly God—not Abraham—who initiates the timing of events in 4:3–5. In other words, the one clear reference to a father figure in 4:1–2 clearly parallels God’s role in 4:3–5 while Abraham goes unmentioned. This connection between the father in 4:1–2 and God in 4:4–5 requires an explanation, especially since Paul

107 Cf. Cornely (cited in Lagrange, *Galates*, 98), who similarly argues that 4:3 has Jews in view on the grounds that the Jews have a right to inherit through Abraham even before conversion whereas gentiles do not. Scholars who also understand the “we” as referring exclusively to Jews include Taylor, “Eschatological Interdependence,” 310; Witherington, *Grace*, 284; Matera, *Galatians*, 149; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164; Donaldson, “Curse,” 95–98; Bruce, *Galatians*, 193. Most interpreters, however, regard the “we” as inclusive of both Jews and gentiles. See Moo, *Galatians*, 260; de Boer, *Galatians*, 258–59; Young, “Pronominal Shifts,” 214–15; Hays, “Galatians,” 282; Becker, “Galater,” 62; Martyn, *Galatians*, 336; Eckstein, *Verheißung*, 228; Williams, *Galatians*, 107–10; Dunn, *Galatians*, 212; Rohde, *Galater*, 168; Fung, *Galatians*, 181; Burton, *Galatians*, 215; Byrne, *Sons*, 177; Oepke, *Galater*, 128–29; Betz, *Galatians*, 204; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 268; Schlier, *Galater*, 193; Bonnard, “Galates,” 84; Lagrange, *Galates*, 98–99; Meyer, “Galatians,” 166; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 166–67. Augustine argues that “we” refers to gentiles alone (*Exp. Gal.* 29.4; see Plumer, *Augustine’s Commentary*, 176–77), as does Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 71.

could have simply referred to the minor's reaching the age of majority without mentioning the father.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, however, other aspects of the passage seem to call this correlation of the paradigmatic father and God into question. For instance, in addition to the previously mentioned tensions inherent in identifying God with the father, the lack of any lexical correspondence at this point in the analogy ("until the time set by the father," ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός / "when the fullness of time came, God sent" ὅτε . . . ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεός) differentiates this parallel from the parallels discussed above, suggesting that Paul does not intend to apply this component of his general principle too strictly to "our" situation as heirs in 4:3. Further weakening the connection, Paul does not even identify God explicitly as father until 4:6, establishing his fatherhood in 4:4–5 only indirectly through the designation of Jesus as his "son." More importantly, while 4:4–5 clearly implies Jesus' status as God's son, "we" do not become God's sons until the adoption in 4:5–6, making it difficult for God to function as "our" father in 4:3.

These tensions disappear if the connection of the father's time-setting role in 4:2 with God's action in 4:4–5 signals a second level on which the analogy applies. I accordingly suggest that God *is* a time-setting father in 4:4–5, but he is such a father with respect to Jesus, not "us." In other words, just like the heir in 4:1–2, Jesus—the son of God and true lord of all (cf. 4:1)—endures a time of minority enslavement (i.e., the incarnation): he becomes "no different" (οὐδὲν διαφέρει, 4:1) from the Jewish sons of Abraham—who were themselves "no different" from the gentiles—in being enslaved to the στοιχεῖα, a state in which he remains until entering his inheritance as Abraham's divine seed at the time set by his father.

Before I explain this application of the minor heir principle to Jesus, I should note two broader exegetical issues in 4:4–5 that this suggestion helps resolve. First, it makes sense of the otherwise superfluous reference to God's sending of his son. The application of the general principle to "our" situation in 4:3 implies that "we" receive adoption as "our" inheritance at the fullness of time. In 4:6, however, Paul relates this adoption to God's sending of the *Spirit* of his son. Thus, although the sending of the son ultimately makes the reception of "our" inheritance possible, it does not directly correspond to any element in the analogy of 4:1–2 with "our" situation in 4:3. Paul could therefore

108 Although we do know of fathers who explicitly set the age of their children's majority (see pp. 157–58), the relative scarcity of known examples suggests that many fathers would simply have abided by the established legal age of majority.

have jumped straight to God's sending of the Spirit; instead, he portrays "the fullness of time" as a punctiliar moment that extends from the initial sending of Jesus (4:4) all the way through the postresurrection sending of the Spirit (4:6). Viewing 4:4–5 as a second application of the principle in 4:1–2 explains not only why Paul begins with the sending of the son but also why he describes it in greater detail than the seemingly more relevant sending of the Spirit.

Second, this analysis will show both *that* Gal 4:4–5 refers to the incarnation and *why* it refers to the incarnation alone—with no mention of the crucifixion or resurrection—when discussing Jesus' role in enabling "our" adoption. Dunn has argued that the language of Gal 4:4–5 is ambiguous with regard to incarnation and, in context, likely describes only God's sending of Jesus to his redemptive death.¹⁰⁹ I am not convinced the language is truly as ambiguous as Dunn suggests,¹¹⁰ but even granting its ambiguity, Paul's larger argument about the dual sonship of the Abrahamic seed presumes Jesus' divine nature and therefore dictates a reading of incarnation.¹¹¹ In particular, I will argue that γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός makes a crucial christological point about Jesus' divine sonship at birth (i.e., "he became incarnate") and not, as Dunn suggests, a (superfluous) soteriological point about his status (i.e., "he was human").¹¹² As for the

109 James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1989; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 42.

110 Dunn observes that, since ἐξαποστέλλω can describe God's commissioning of human messengers (e.g., Exod 3:12; Acts 22:21), it need not imply the heavenly origins of the one sent (ibid., 38–39). He then suggests that Paul's use of γίνομαι instead of γεννάω shows a focus on Jesus' human nature instead of his birth (40). As Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 214–16, counters, however, the parallel with the sending (ἐξαπέστειλεν) of the Spirit in 4:6 suggests a sending from heaven in 4:4 as well, while the position of the γενόμενον participle after the main verb in 4:4 (ἐξαπέστειλεν) suggests a "coming to be" subsequent to the "sending."

111 Dunn also argues that the lack of any disputes over incarnation in the Pauline writings suggests that Paul did not espouse such a "novel teaching" (*Christology*, 43). The thoroughgoing presumption of Jesus' divine origin as Abraham's seed in Gal 3:15–4:11 undermines the force of this argument from silence.

112 Ibid., 41–42. According to Dunn, Jesus' humanity here signifies that God commissioned one who shared in "the lot of [fallen] Adam" so that humans could share in his "risen humanity." This proposed Adam christology, however, loses its force apart from a doctrine of incarnation. Without a doctrine of incarnation, the only reason Paul would have to assert such a christology would be to counter the thought that Jesus was divine (a possibility Dunn raises, pp. 43–44), but nothing in the letter suggests that the Galatians denied Jesus' humanity.

passage's exclusive focus on incarnation,¹¹³ I suggest that it does not point to Christ's incarnation *qua* incarnation so much as it highlights the accompanying subjection to the στοιχεῖα. In other words, it shows the application of the minor heir principle to Christ.

To see how this second application of the minor heir principle works, we accordingly first need to understand the nature of the enslaving στοιχεῖα. This much-debated term basically signifies "constituent elements."¹¹⁴ In Paul's day it could refer to letters of the alphabet, to foundational principles, or, most commonly by far, to the elements understood as composing the physical world: fire, water, air, earth, and (sometimes) ether.¹¹⁵ The predominance of this latter meaning becomes almost absolute in instances where τοῦ κόσμου (or an equivalent expression) modifies στοιχεῖα.¹¹⁶ Accounts of Paul's reasoning, however, must consider not only this lexical evidence but also the relationship of these στοιχεῖα to the law since it is the Jews' position "under law" (ὕπὸ νόμον, 4:5) that presumably allows Paul to identify them (cf. ἡμεῖς, 4:3) as those enslaved ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in 4:3. Moreover, the term also appears—without τοῦ κόσμου—in 4:9–10, where Paul presents the Galatians' calendrical observances as a desire to be enslaved to the στοιχεῖα "again" (πάλιν). This "again" effectively

113 Betz, *Galatians*, argues that Paul's statements in 3:13–14 and 4:4–5 stand in irreconcilable tension, with the former appealing to Christ's death as the key redemptive event while the latter appeals to his life under the law (207–8, esp. 207 n. 51). The connections between 3:13–14 and 4:4–5, however—the passages appear in the same section of the letter (3:15–4:11), both have consecutive ἵνα clauses, and both use the verb ἐξαγοράζω to describe Jesus' "purchasing" of those under law—suggest that 4:4–5 simply assumes the means by which Christ "purchases" those under the law in 3:13–14 as background knowledge. See Hays, *Faith*, 106–11.

114 See LSJ, "στοιχεῖον," 1647, meaning II; BDAG, "στοιχεῖον," 946.

115 Josef Blinzler, "Lexikalisches zu dem Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus," in *Studiorum paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus 1961* (AnBib 17–18; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1963), 2.429–43, 439–40. His survey of pre- and post-Pauline Jewish/Christian writings (extending up to Clement of Alexandria) finds over 78% (137/175) of the instances of στοιχεῖα refer to the four (or five) elements. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 510–18; Eduard Schweizer, "Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20," *JBL* 107 (1988): 455–68, 455–64; Gerhard Delling, "στοιχέω, συστοιχέω, στοιχεῖον," *TDNT* 7:670–87; Belleville, "Under Law," 64–69.

116 Dietrich Rusam, "Neue Belege zu den στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (Gal 4,3,9; Kol 2,8,20)," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 119–25; Blinzler, "Lexikalisches," 440–41. See, e.g., Philo, *Aet.* 109.3–4; *Her.* 134.5, 140.3; *Sib. Or.* 2.206–7, 3.80, 8.337–340. Rusam, "Neue Belege," 121, 124, finds only one exception: Sextus Empiricus's reference to the Pythagoreans' belief that numbers constituted στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (*Pyr.* 3.152, second/third century CE).

connects the στοιχεῖα to the “things that by nature are not gods” that formerly enslaved the Galatians according to 4:8.

Not surprisingly, interpretations of the στοιχεῖα vary depending on which contextual factor receives the most weight. Scholars who emphasize the contemporary lexical evidence typically identify the στοιχεῖα with the four elements, whether literally, metonymically, or metaphorically.¹¹⁷ Those who emphasize the connection with the Jewish law typically identify the στοιχεῖα with elementary principles.¹¹⁸ Those who emphasize the connection with the “nongods” in 4:8–9 typically identify the στοιχεῖα with demonic or astral spirits.¹¹⁹ Each of these options, however, also has at least one significant drawback. Interpretations of the στοιχεῖα as elements tend to produce superficial, easily disputed connections between the Jewish law and the στοιχεῖα. Interpretations of the στοιχεῖα as elementary principles have trouble accounting for the modifying phrase τοῦ κόσμου in 4:3.¹²⁰ Finally, interpretations of the

117 E.g., based largely on the connection of στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου with ascetic practices and the worship of angels in Col 2:8, 18–20, Schweizer, “Slaves,” 466, suggests that the phrase presumes the Pythagorean concept of “the imprisonment of the soul in the ceaseless rotation of the four elements”; the law then becomes a set of purifying (and thus freeing) regulations equivalent to the Galatians’ former ascetic practices. Alternatively, Martinus C. de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 204–24, 220–22, argues that the four elements metonymically signify the Galatians’ former religious beliefs, beliefs that Paul correlates with the Jewish law on the basis that both involve calendrical observances. For Delling, *TDNT*, 7:685 (followed by Fung, *Galatians*, 189–91), the physical elements indicated by τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου metaphorically signify everything on which humanity’s existence rested before Christ, particularly pre-Christian religion. Such a metaphor, however, would be poorly chosen: pre-Christian religion does not “compose” human existence in the same way that the elements compose the world, nor does Paul seem likely to have identified such religion as a true basis for human existence.

118 E.g., Witherington, *Grace*, 284–86; Matera, *Galatians*, 149–50; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 165–66; Belleville, “Under Law,” 67–69; Burton, *Galatians*, 518; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 167.

119 E.g., Clinton E. Arnold, “Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3,9,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 55–76; Reicke, “Law,”; Schlier, *Galater*, 191–92; Betz, *Galatians*, 204–5; Bruce, *Galatians*, 202–4.

120 Recognizing the difficulty—in what sense are these elementary principles (esp. the law) “of the world”?—Burton, *Galatians*, 518, argues that the genitive must indicate possession rather than source, hence, “the rudimentary religious teachings possessed by the [human] race.” The genitive becomes largely superfluous in this reading, however—who else would possess these elementary principles?—making it an awkward addition given the near constant propensity for τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to signify the basic elements of the universe. Cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 167, who posits a more gnostic interpretation: τοῦ κόσμου

στοιχεῖα as spirits cannot point to any instances of the word with this meaning until the late second century CE.¹²¹

How, then, should we understand στοιχεῖα? J. Louis Martyn points the way forward by emphasizing a different contextual element. Observing that Paul essentially defines κόσμος in 6:14–15 as the paired opposition of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and noting that the ancients often describe the composition of the world in terms of such pairs, Martyn connects the στοιχεῖα to the list of opposites that believers transcend in Christ according to 3:28: Jew and gentile, slave and free, male and female. Focusing on the Law / Not-Law division suggested by 6:14–15, he concludes that Paul associates τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου with “the elements of religious distinction,”¹²² a conclusion that largely ignores the male/female and slave/free distinctions in 3:28. I therefore suggest that Paul instead conceives of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου more broadly as the basic elements/divisions that compose humanity.¹²³

Although this suggestion attributes a different meaning to τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου than the usually attested reference to the elements composing the universe, it does invoke the basic sense of στοιχεῖον as a “constituent element” while also accounting for the addition of τοῦ κόσμου. Furthermore, this interpretation explains the association of both the Jewish law and pagan religion with the στοιχεῖα in a way that does not require the problematical equating of the three. That is to say, subjection to the Jewish law results in a subjection to the στοιχεῖα, not because the law is itself a στοιχεῖον, but because the law makes its adherents Jews, i.e., it divides them from the rest of humanity. Following the same logic, the Galatians’ former enslavement to the nongods in 4:8 would represent an enslavement to the στοιχεῖα because their religious practices and beliefs differentiated them from other people groups.¹²⁴

indicates that these principles pertain to the material rather than the spiritual realm. Why would such principles no longer govern believers (who remain material beings)?

121 Arnold, “Returning,” 57–59, attempts to overcome this obstacle by arguing that late texts using στοιχεῖα as “spirits” accurately preserve earlier traditions.

122 Martyn, *Galatians*, 402–6. Acknowledging the usual meaning of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as a reference to the elements composing the cosmos, Martyn further suggests that his proposed meaning would likely emerge only after repeated readings and reflection. How the Galatians would have understood a reference to the elements in an initial reading, however, remains unclear.

123 For τοῦ κόσμου as “the world of humanity,” see Burton, *Galatians*, 514, 518. Cf. Rom 3:6, 5:12, 11:12.

124 This interpretation presupposes the close association—seen preeminently in Israel—between a people’s gods and its national/ethnic identity in the ancient world. Cf. Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 49: “Ancient ethnic groups, including the *Ioudaioi*, were affiliated with

This understanding of the στοιχεία enables us to understand how 4:4–5 functions as a second application of the minor heir principle in 4:1–2: Paul claims that Jesus is born ἐκ γυναικός and ὑπὸ νόμον (4:4) to establish his subjection to the στοιχεία.¹²⁵ That is to say, by entering the ranks of humanity through the incarnation, Jesus becomes subject to the restrictions of particularity characterized by the three pairs of distinctions in 3:28. With respect to the Jew-Greek distinction, coming under law (ὑπὸ νόμον) clearly establishes him as a Jew. With respect to the male/female distinction, he is born a male ἐκ γυναικός, a phrase I will discuss more below. Finally, these two designations indicate that, with respect to the slave/free distinction, he becomes a slave to the στοιχεία.¹²⁶

In each case, however, Jesus ultimately transcends these distinctions, effectively uniting Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. Thus, from a woman he emerges as a man. As a Jew cursed under law in the crucifixion, he emerges in the resurrection as one not under law and, therefore, a gentile. From his status as a slave of the στοιχεία, he accordingly emerges in the resurrection as one free from the limitations of such restrictions. In short, Jesus

and defined by a particular god or gods. Loyalty to a deity or deities, often manifested in specific worship practices, signaled membership in particular ethnic groups.” As an example, she cites Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who points to similar sacrificial procedures to establish a group’s Greek identity (*Antiquitates romanae* 1.21.1–2). See, too, Paula Fredriksen, “The Question of Worship: Gods, Pagans, and the Redemption of Israel,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (eds. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 175–201, 182: “To fully change gods was tantamount to changing ethnicity.” For the biblical grounding of this view in God’s subjecting the nations to lesser gods after the Tower of Babel incident (Gen 11:1–9; cf. Deut 4:19–20, 32:8–9; Ps 82), see Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 112–15.

125 Noting a purported parallel with Christ’s “becoming a curse” (γενόμενος . . . κατάρα) in 3:13, Wilson, “Under,” 373, suggests that the Son’s “coming under law” (γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον) in 4:4 refers to the same event, i.e., Jesus’ death. This proposed connection of 3:13 and 4:4 requires that “under law” function as shorthand for “under the curse of the law.” Contra Wilson (371), however, 3:10 does not describe an active curse on those under law (see pp. 90–97 above). We therefore have no reason to conflate the law with the curse, thereby undermining the association of “coming under law” with Jesus’ death.

126 As my student Jason Carpintero noted in class, this observation explains the otherwise unusual ordering in 3:28a that parallels slaves with Jews/males and the free with Greeks/females: Jew, slave, and male all describe Jesus’ incarnation. Contra Martin, “Covenant,” 121 n. 34, who suggests that the parallels respectively reflect the circumcised and uncircumcised members of Abraham’s household, and Gerhard Dautzenberg, “Da ist nicht männlich und weiblich’: Zur Interpretation von Gal 3,28,” *Kairos* n.s. 24 (1982): 181–206, 183, who argues for an—as he admits—awkward chiasmic explanation linking Jew/free/male and Greek/slave/female.

becomes the embodiment and summation of the entire κόσμος. Hence Paul claims that in Christ, there is no more Jew and gentile, no more slave and free, no more male and female (3:28): as Paul's Abrahamic argument has maintained throughout, integration into Christ supplies whatever we lack in our human particularity.

This analysis further suggests that γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός points to the virgin birth (such that the male Jesus comes solely from a female) and not, as most modern commentators understand it, as a more general pointer to Jesus' humanity.¹²⁷ While the idiom "born from woman" can signify "human,"¹²⁸ such an interpretation has little relevance in context. Indeed, puzzlement at the inclusion of the phrase γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός has helped prompt many scholars to identify 4:4–5 as incorporating a preexisting creed or sending formula that Paul has integrated rather poorly.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, regardless of whether or not Paul first penned these words, he still chose to include them as part of his argument. As I will show, interpreting them as a reference to the virgin birth not only fits better with the above understanding of the στοιχεία, it also enables them to make a vital contribution to the argument.

J. B. Lightfoot rightly notes that 4:4–5 forms a chiasm: God sent his son

- A. γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός
- B. γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον
- B'. ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ
- A'. ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν

Being born "under law" clearly corresponds to purchasing those "under law"; being born "from a woman" evokes the familial ties inherent in "receiving adoption."¹³⁰ As in 3:13–14, the two ἵνα clauses should be read consecutively rather than in parallel, so that "our" receiving adoption depends on the prior

127 See the history of interpretation in Emile de Roover, "La maternité virginal de Marie dans l'interprétation de Gal 4,4," in *Studiorum paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus 1961* (AnBib 17–18; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1963), 2.17–37, who notes that almost all nineteenth and twentieth century scholars who understand Gal 4:4 as a reference to the virgin birth are Catholic, the Protestant Zahn being the most prominent exception (34–35).

128 Cf. ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν, Matt 11:11; יְלִידָה / γεννητὸς γυναικός, Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4.

129 E.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 205; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166–67.

130 Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 168. So, too, Dunn, *Christology*, 41; Ellicott, *Galatians*, 94; Augustine, *Exp. Gal.* 30.8–11 (Plummer, *Augustine's Commentary*, 178–79). Byrne, *Sons*, 179–80; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166; and Witherington, *Grace*, 287, also argue for a chiasm, but they transform the outer frame so as to correlate the adoption as sons with God's

purchasing of “those under law.”¹³¹ Nevertheless, the chiasmic structure suggests that the particular aspects of Christ’s coming identified in A and B in some way enable the corresponding purposes cited in A’ and B’.¹³² With respect to the B–B’ frame, 3:13–14 explains the connection: Jesus had to come under law so that he could be cursed by the law and, through his subsequent vindication, thereby provide Jews who united with him the ability to escape its dominion.¹³³ With respect to the A–A’ frame, we must ask how being “born from a woman” enables adoption, whether through Jesus’ general humanity or through the virgin birth.

A reading of γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός that focuses on Jesus’ general humanity has difficulty explaining how that humanity enables adoption; what obstacle to adoption it would remove remains unclear. Interpreters who address this issue usually refer to the need for a human representative to atone for human sin. Morna Hooker, e.g., invokes the language of “interchange,” claiming that Christ had to become like us so that, after his representative suffering, we could become like him.¹³⁴ The problem with this approach is that Galatians—and 3:15–4:11 in particular—never points to sin as a main factor preventing humanity from becoming children of God. Instead, receiving the Spirit of adoption seems to depend wholly on the unconditional promises made to Abraham and his seed. The main inhibiting factor, in other words, is not sin but the delay in the appearance of the seed (cf. Gal 3:19, 25–26; 4:2).

Reading γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός as an allusion to the virgin birth, on the other hand, provides an explanation of adoption that accords well with the passage’s emphasis on Abraham’s divine seed.¹³⁵ In short, Jesus had to be born of a virgin so that he did not surrender his divine sonship. That is to say, if a human

sending of his son, thereby awkwardly omitting the phrase γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός from consideration.

131 So Taylor, “Eschatological Interdependence,” 311; Rohde, *Galater*, 172; Fung, *Galatians*, 182; Bruce, *Galatians*, 197; Betz, *Galatians*, 208. For the clauses as parallel, see Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172; Byrne, *Sons*, 183; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 168. For the second ἵνα clause as an explanation/expansion of the first, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 270–71; Schlier, *Galater*, 197.

132 So also Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 168.

133 See pp. 110–31.

134 Hooker, “Interchange,” 358. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 217.

135 Scholars debate whether Paul knew of the virgin birth tradition since he never expressly mentions it. Nevertheless, an allusion to the virgin birth here in Gal 4:5b has a potential parallel—albeit similarly disputed—in 1 Cor 11:11–12, where Paul claims that men and women are interdependent “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ) since just as “the woman is from the man” (ἡ γυνή ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός) so also “the man is through the woman” (ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς

father had sired him, then God would no longer be his father. Only through the virgin birth could he remain the son of God while taking on human form. Only through the virgin birth could he be both the son of God (his father), a son of Abraham (through his mother), and, thus, Abraham's divine seed to whom the promise comes. The virgin birth therefore enables adoption by allowing Jesus to retain his divine sonship so that "we" might attain that status through union in Christ.

Although less decisive, a consideration of the first-person plural subject in 4:5b (ἀπολάβωμεν) points to the same conclusion. Given the clear affirmation in 4:6 that gentiles receive adoption and the distinction between "those under law" in the B–B' frame and the first-person references in the A' line, many scholars—even several who associate the first-person references earlier in the sentence exclusively with Jews—do identify the "we" in 4:5b as at least including (and possibly consisting entirely of) gentiles.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the first-person subject in 4:5b likely comprises Jews alone, as it has throughout the argument and, more tellingly, earlier in the sentence (4:3).¹³⁷ As for the purported indications of gentile inclusion, Paul likely characterizes the Jews as "those under law" in the B–B' frame, not to differentiate them from the ensuing "we," but because their status under law is precisely the point at issue in that frame. (The characterization also forms the structural key for the chiasm.) Similarly, I will argue below that 4:6 draws out the implication of the gentiles'

γυναικός). If the latter part of this claim refers simply to the normal birth process, then why does Paul qualify the resulting interdependence as being "in the Lord"?

136 For interpreters who see the first-person ἀπολάβωμεν as comprising both Jews and gentiles, see Young, "Pronominal Shifts," 214–15; Williams, *Galatians*, 110–11; Dunn, *Galatians*, 217; Matera, *Galatians*, 150; Fung, *Galatians*, 183; Donaldson, "Curse," 98; Bruce, *Galatians*, 196; Lagrange, *Galates*, 103; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 169. Several scholars even argue that τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον in 4:5a comprises both Jews and gentiles: Moo, *Galatians*, 267; de Boer, *Galatians*, 258–59; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 271; Rohde, *Galater*, 172; Burton, *Galatians*, 219; Byrne, *Sons*, 182; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 270; Schlier, *Galater*, 197. Interpreters who understand the first-person reference as consisting entirely of gentiles include Dalton, "Meaning," 40–41; Gaston, *Paul*, 77; Hays, *Faith*, 101.

137 So Taylor, "Eschatological Interdependence," 310; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172; Witherington, *Grace*, 289. Gaston, *Paul*, 77, and Johnson Hodge, *Sons*, 71, argue that 4:5b cannot refer to Jews since Paul lists υἱοθεσία as one of the Jews' privileges in Rom 9:4. Romans 9:4 need not imply, however, that the Jews had already received their adoption. Rather, they inherit the promise of divine adoption through the Abrahamic διαθήκη; Gal 4:4–6 then describes the initial (cf. Rom 8:23) fulfillment of that promise.

adoption based on the adoption of the Jews in 4:5b. We can thus account for the factors that purportedly point to a more inclusive “we” without resorting to the awkward midsentence shift in first-person references that results if the “we” in 4:5b includes gentiles. Since an interpretation of γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός emphasizing Jesus’ common humanity would suggest a correspondingly inclusive subject in 4:5b, the focus on Jews instead supports the alternative interpretation of the phrase as an allusion to the virgin birth.

The common thread running throughout the various aspects of this analysis of 4:1–5 has been the importance of distinguishing between Abrahamic and divine sonship. This distinction enables us to make sense of the Jews’ status as enslaved minor heirs (i.e., of Abraham) in 4:3 before they receive (divine) adoption in 4:5b. The sons of Abraham, however, are not the only heirs subject to a time of minority enslavement: the otherwise superfluous discussion in 4:4–5 shows that the son of God endures a similar time of enslavement, becoming subject to the στοιχεῖα through his incarnation as a son of Abraham “under the law” (4:4c). Jesus can assume this Abrahamic sonship without surrendering his divine sonship because no human father usurps God’s place; Jesus is born “from a woman” (4:4b) without a man’s involvement. He thus unites divine and Abrahamic sonship in human form, a dual status that qualifies him as Abraham’s promised seed. As this seed, his cursed death and subsequent resurrection (cf. 3:13–14) then enable the sons of Abraham to escape the dominion of the law through union with him (4:5a) and receive adoption as God’s sons (4:5b), a part of their inheritance from their forefather Abraham.

Armed with this analysis of 4:1–5, we now come to 4:6–7:

Gal 4:6–7

⁶Ὅτι δέ ἐστε υἱοί, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν, κρᾶζον, Ἀββα ὁ πατήρ. ⁷ὥστε οὐκέτι εἰ δοῦλος ἀλλὰ υἱός· εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ.

^{6a}And because you are sons, ^bGod sent forth the Spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, “Abba Father.” ⁷Thus, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, also an heir through God.

Understanding these verses requires that we explain the shift from second person (“because *you* are sons,” ὅτι ἐστε υἱοί) to first person (“into *our* hearts,” εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν) in 4:5. Most scholars agree that, regardless of whom Paul indicates with his earlier first-person references, the instance in 4:6 clearly includes gentiles; the preceding second-person reference simply emphasizes

the application to Paul's readers.¹³⁸ This gentile-inclusive interpretation, however, creates an unsolvable logistical problem: if the subject of ἐστε in 4:6a and the referent of ἡμῶν in 4:6b overlap, then sonship must *precede* the reception of the Spirit, but it is presumably the reception of the Spirit that makes one a son of God (cf. Rom 8:15).

Attempts to resolve this paradox typically seek either to differentiate adoption from reception of the Spirit or else to eliminate the two-step process required by a causal ὅτι. The latter approach postulates a nominal ὅτι in 4:5—"And *that* you are sons [is evident because]"—an interpretation that leaves too much unstated, especially compared to the more straightforward causal reading. Had Paul intended this nominal sense, we would have expected a more explicit construction as in 3:11 (ὅτι . . . δῆλον ὅτι).¹³⁹ With regard to the former approach, Paul's characterization of the Spirit in 4:6—"the Spirit of [God's] son" (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ), "crying 'Abba, Father'" (κράζον, Ἀββὰ ὁ πατήρ)—renders a distinction between reception of the Spirit and adoption untenable. He even refers to this "Abba Father"-crying Spirit as "a spirit of adoption" (πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας) in Rom 8:15. The reception of the Spirit accordingly *is* the adoption unto sonship; "our" reception of the Spirit in 4:6 should be understood as an elaboration of the process by which "we" receive adoption in 4:5.¹⁴⁰

Given this stalemate, a third type of proposal suggests that a believer's simultaneous reception of the Spirit and sonship means that Paul can describe their relative dependence in either order. Since 4:6 therefore cannot portray a chronological relationship, we should instead focus on Paul's purported purpose, namely, establishing the Galatians' status as sons of God through an

138 Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 208—with their awkward argument that Galatians addresses Hellenistic Israelites throughout—represent a rare exception. After admitting that external textual evidence favors the reading ἡμῶν (P⁴⁶, Ⳑ, A, B, C, D*, G, P, 1739, and Marcion [according to Tertullian] among others all support it), Witherington, *Grace*, 289, avoids the question by arguing for ὑμεῖς on the shaky ground that "your" fits Paul's argument better.

139 Proponents of a nominal ὅτι (a minority position) include Lietzmann, *Galater*, 27; Ellcott, *Galatians*, 95; Lagrange, *Galates*, 103-4; Zahn, *Galater*, 204-5. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 219.

140 Contra Moo, *Galatians*, 268-69; Hays, "Galatians," 285; Vouga, *Galater*, 102; Fung, *Galatians*, 184; Burton, *Galatians*, 221; Schlier, *Galater*, 197; Meyer, "Galatians," 174; Calvin, "Galatians," 120. These scholars often distinguish between the objective basis of sonship in Christ's prior work and the subjective experience (or testimony) of it in the reception of the Spirit, but nothing in Galatians suggests that Paul has such philosophical distinctions in mind.

appeal to their experience of the Spirit (cf. 3:1–5).¹⁴¹ This suggestion makes no sense: reception of the Spirit and sonship cannot both require the other as a prerequisite.

A true resolution of the seeming paradox emerges only if the first- and second-person referents in 4:6 do not overlap. If these referents are distinct, designating—as they have throughout this argument—Jews and gentiles respectively, then the logical problem of the relationship between adoption and the reception of the Spirit disappears. In its place, we have a scenario in which Jewish reception of the Spirit depends on the gentiles' prior status as sons.¹⁴² Although scholars almost always regard this scenario as the more problematical option,¹⁴³ it essentially repeats the logic of 3:13–14, where the consecutive *ἵνα* clauses indicated that the Jewish reception of the Spirit (3:14b) depended on the blessing of Abraham coming to the gentiles (3:14a).¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, 4:6 seems to presume the same explanation: it is because gentiles receive the Spirit of adoption as Abraham's blessing that the Jews in Christ can also receive that Spirit. Once again, the Jews receive the spirit of divine sonship only by effectively becoming gentiles / rejoining the nations.

In this interpretation, 4:6 does not prove the gentiles' divine sonship by appealing to *their* experience of the Spirit but by pointing to *the Jews'* reception of the Spirit. The fact that Jews have become sons of God shows that the gentiles must be sons of God. This reading then also offers a plausible explanation of the shift to second-person singular (ἐγὼ) in 4:7. The appeal to a statement in the present tense ("you *are* sons," ἐστε υἱοί) as the basis for a past action ("God *sent forth*," ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεός) suggests that the second-person plural reference in 4:6 refers to the general state of gentiles, a group to which Paul's Galatian readers belong. In other words, Paul does not ground the outpouring of the Spirit among the Jews on the sonship of the Galatians in particular but rather on the general possibility of gentile sonship that Christ makes available; it is the availability of sonship to the gentiles that enables Jews-who-effectively-become-gentiles-in-Christ also to receive the Spirit.¹⁴⁵ In 4:7, then, Paul specifically applies this general truth to the gentile Galatians. To indicate the shift, he switches to the more personal singular verb.

141 Longenecker, *Galatians*, 173; Witherington, *Grace*, 290. Cf. Matera, *Galatians*, 151.

142 So Taylor, "Eschatological Interdependence," 312.

143 E.g., Williams, *Galatians*, 110–11.

144 See pp. 126–28.

145 Once again, the argument does not require that individual gentiles were actually the first to receive the Spirit, which they almost assuredly were not historically. See pp. 126–28.

One final point deserves mention. Paul draws a parallel between God's sending forth of his son (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, 4:4) and his sending forth of the Spirit of his son (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, 4:6). I suggest that the similar language portrays a twofold sending of God's son corresponding to his dual sonship. He is sent in the flesh and in the Spirit. The first sending reflects his status as a physical son of Abraham, the second, his status as a spiritual son of God. He comes in the first instance into the midst of Israel to free the physical sons of Abraham from the law, in the second, into the hearts of gentiles to create the sons of God who thereby become Abraham's spiritual children of promise (4:28; see Part III).

I conclude this section with a brief summary of the role that 4:8–11 plays in the argument. Having established the gentile Galatians as sons of God—a status described here in terms of “knowing / being known by God” (4:9)—Paul now makes the ramifications for the Galatians explicit. He portrays their observing “days and months and seasons and years” (ἡμέρας . . . καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτοὺς, 4:10) as essentially a return to slavery under the “weak and poor στοιχεῖα” (4:9) from which Christ has already freed them (cf. 4:7). In contrast to the clearly Jewish list in Col 2:16—“a festival, new moon, or sabbaths (ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων)—the time-keeping scheme of days, months, seasons and years actually corresponds better to pagan time-keeping practices,¹⁴⁶ probably because Paul has generalized the law's obligations to connect them with the Galatians' former pagan practices.¹⁴⁷ Regardless, Gal 4:8–11 clearly establishes the enslavement that results from the Galatians' association of gentile circumcision and law observance with the gospel of Christ.

Seed Conclusion

In 3:15–4:11, Paul argues that the law has no relevance for believers in Christ by invoking Abraham's singular seed, whom he identifies as Christ in 3:16. Paul's

146 Troy Martin, “Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 105–19, 111–19, suggests that the Galatians, having been convinced of the necessity for Christian circumcision, have returned to their pagan ways rather than submit to the knife. In this scenario, it is the Galatians' *forsaking* of Christ and not their *supplementing* of Christ that drives Paul's concern throughout the letter. I find it hard to reconcile Martin's reading with Paul's characterization of his audience in 4:21 as those “desiring to be under law.” For the problems with Martin's explanation of 4:21 as addressing the agitators, see pp. 300–301 below.

147 So Martyn, *Galatians*, 414–18—who relates the list to fourth day of creation (Gen 1:14)—and de Boer, “Meaning,” 217.

treatment of the seed raises three main issues: the basis on which he identifies Christ rather than Isaac as Abraham's seed, his reason for establishing the singular nature of this seed, and the consistency of his subsequent argument identifying the singular seed with the plurality of Galatian believers in 3:29. Although these issues have often led interpreters to find Paul's argument arbitrary and unpersuasive, Part II has argued that the understanding of God's διαθήκη with Abraham as his testamentary adoption of the patriarch renders Paul's argument both reasonable and consistent.

With regard to the identification of Christ as Abraham's seed, Chapter 4 argued that Paul discusses the Abrahamic διαθήκη as a Hellenistic adoptive testament. God's adoption of the patriarch then implies that the promised seed must be a son of both Abraham and God. Although Abraham offers his son Isaac to God in the *Aqedah* of Gen 22, the passage suggests that God refrains from taking Isaac as his Abrahamic heir, promising to provide a naturally born son himself. In accordance with Greek practice, Isaac accordingly remains behind to continue Abraham's original household. Meanwhile, at the proper time, God fulfills his promise by sending his own son to become a son of Abraham (4:4). Jesus thus qualifies as the promised seed and Abrahamic heir because he is a son of both Abraham and God.

This understanding of the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an adoptive testament enables Paul's identification of Christ as Abraham's seed in 3:16 to support the verse's earlier argument for the seed's singularity, thereby avoiding the problems that arise when interpreters reverse that relationship. If, however, Paul does not appeal to the seed's singularity to establish its christological identity, then why does he establish its singularity? He argues for the singular nature of the Abrahamic seed, I suggested, because it has two crucial implications for the law, one negative and one positive.

Taking the negative implication first, Chapter 5 looked at 3:15–20, where Paul argues that the Abrahamic inheritance could not depend on law observance without violating the principle that no one sets aside or supplements a ratified διαθήκη (3:15) on both counts. First, God had already promised to bless all the nations as part of Abraham's inheritance. Tying the reception of this blessing to law observance would therefore set aside God's promise to Abraham (3:17–18). Second, since the law was given to the plurality of Israelites, making law observance the key to inheriting would also supplement the διαθήκη by increasing the number of heirs beyond the one seed to whom the inheritance was promised (3:19–20). The law thus has nothing to do with receiving Abraham's inheritance.

As Chapter 6 described, the positive implication of the seed's singularity for the law also arises from the unchangeable nature of the Abrahamic

διαθήκη. God promises to bless the nations with the Spirit as an inheritance for Abraham and his singular seed. Reception of the Spirit, however, adopts the recipients as sons of God. By effectively making all of Abraham's physical descendants through Isaac and Israel sons of God, the fulfillment of this promise would increase the number of Abrahamic seed—i.e., those who are sons of both God and Abraham—a situation the ratified διαθήκη does not allow (cf. 3:19–20). God consequently adds the law to distinguish Abraham's sons from the nations/gentiles, thereby excepting them from the promised blessing.

God, however, also cannot annul his previously ratified promise to Abraham to bless all the nations, including Israel. The law therefore ultimately cannot prevent Israel's reception of the Spirit and life (cf. 3:17–18). What the law does instead is compel Abraham's physical descendants into Christ, the one seed, to receive their adoption as sons of God. It accomplishes this task through a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, it reminds the Jews that their justification truly rests on their faith in God and not their works of law (3:23–29). On the other hand, it forces Jews to transgress and incur a curse to receive the promised blessing with the gentiles (4:1–11). Since only Christ can counteract this curse, becoming Abraham's true seed/heir requires that Jews die to the law and embrace Christ, trusting that they will thereby receive God's blessing. This ultimate step of faith then proves them to be true sons of Abraham (3:7).

The law thus finds both its purpose and its termination in the singular Abrahamic seed (3:19, 21–22). It should therefore have no appeal for gentiles in Christ. Their reception of the Spirit through faith qualifies them as sons of God; their incorporation into Christ through baptism unites them with the Jewish sons of Abraham to form the one seed and heir of Abraham. The gentiles' status as Abrahamic seed thus proves that not even the Jews in Christ remain under the law (3:23–29). Similarly, the Jews' reception of the Spirit that comes to the gentiles proves that the gentiles themselves are no longer slaves but sons and heirs of God (4:1–11). Submitting to the law would accordingly gain them nothing—and lose them everything.

This single entity composed of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God in Christ qualifies as Abraham's sole seed and heir of the promises. Jews thus become dependent on gentiles, gentiles become dependent on Jews, and everyone becomes dependent on Christ. There could perhaps be no better summary of this argument than the impassioned yet terse appeal with which Paul begins the next section of his letter: "Become as I, because I also as you" (Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι καὶ γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς, 4:12). Become, that is, a law-free son of Abraham like I am, because I also have become a Spirit-filled son of God like you.

The Abrahamic seed does not just unify the sons of Abraham and the sons of God, it also unifies Abraham's physical children (the Jews) and his spiritual children of promise (the gentiles). As Part I describes, Gal 3:6–14 focuses on the Jews' status as physical sons of Abraham. After a brief interlude in 4:12–20, Paul returns one final time to the theme of Abrahamic descent in 4:21–5:1. Appropriately, this final segment of Paul's Abrahamic argument focuses on the gentiles as Abraham's "children of promise." These children are the subject of Part III.

PART 3

Children of Promise (Gal 4:21–5:1)

“You are children of promise”

GAL 4:28



The Contrast of Nonadoptive (Sinaitic) and Adoptive (Abrahamic) Testaments as Jewish “Mothers” in Gal 4:24–27

Overview of Children of Promise

After a brief interlude recounting the circumstances of his initial visit (4:12–20), Paul returns one final time to the subject of Abrahamic descent in Gal 4:21–5:1.¹ Focusing on Abraham’s two sons and their mothers,² Paul discerns a slave/free antinomy in the mothers’ statuses (4:22) and a flesh/promise antinomy in the differing natures of the sons’ births (4:23). He then develops an understanding

1 The separation from the rest of the Abrahamic argument in 3:6–4:11 has led some scholars to characterize this passage as an afterthought and, thus, as displaced from its proper place in the argument (Burton, *Galatians*, 251; Oepke, *Galater*, 147; Ulrich Luz, “Der alte und neue Bund bei Paulus und im Hebräerbrief,” *EvT* 27 (1967): 318–36, 319; cf. Schlier, *Galater*, 216). Rough drafts (see Richards, *Paul*, 164–65) would presumably have given Paul the opportunity to correct such a displacement, however. Hansen, *Abraham*, 144–45, explains the separation on the grounds that 4:21–31 rhetorically belongs in the appeal section of the letter, an explanation that falters if, as I will argue, the passage does not primarily exhort the Galatians to “cast out” the agitators (see pp. 323–26 below). Betz, *Galatians*, 239–40, suggests that Paul simply saves his strongest argument for the end of the *probatio*, but Betz’s argument for why Paul would have considered this argument his most compelling—namely, that the indirect and incomplete nature of allegory engages the audience—fails to convince. Offering a tidy thematic division that this chapter will challenge at several points, Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Law Has Given Sarah No Children (Gal. 4:21–30),” *NovT* 29 (1987): 219–35, 235, argues that Abraham’s two wives enable Paul to conclude his preceding discussion of the law by focusing on Hagar (4:22–27) and then, by switching the focus to Sarah, introduce the theme of freedom (4:28–30) that forms the basis for the following exhortations. For Martin, “Apostasy,” 456, this passage stands apart from the earlier Abrahamic discussion because it directly addresses the agitators instead of the Galatians, an interpretation this chapter will dispute. Finally, building on the work of Beverly Gaventa, J. Louis Martyn, “The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah,” in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (eds. John T. Carroll, et al.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 160–92, 170–71, contends that the birth language in 4:19 sets up the subsequent argument. I similarly suggest that 4:12–20 prepares the way for the discussion of the gentiles’ “birth” as children of promise in 4:21–5:1 by reminding the Galatians of their own conversion.

2 Abraham’s sons by Keturah (Gen 25:1–4) have no relevance for this argument.

of Abrahamic descent based on these two antinomies, exploring the slave/free dichotomy in 4:24–27, 30 and the flesh/promise dichotomy in 4:28–29 before delivering a concluding inference and derived exhortation in 4:31–5:1.³

In contrast to the preceding discussions of Abrahamic descent, 4:21–5:1 largely leaves behind the language of sons (3:7) and seed (3:6, 19, 29) to focus on a third descriptor: children (τέκνον, 4:25, 27, 28, 31; cf. 4:19).⁴ Paul clearly identifies the gentile Galatians (“you”) as “children of promise” in 4:28 while subsequently claiming that “we” are children of the free woman (4:31). Part III argues that the key to understanding this passage lies in discerning the relationship between these two sets of children.

Scholars debate exactly how Paul applies the slave/free and flesh/promise antinomies—whether allegorically, typologically, or as a mixture of the two—and to whom he applies them. Regardless of their answers, most interpreters agree that the passage asserts a figurative interpretation of Abraham’s family that stands in considerable tension with a straightforward reading of the underlying Genesis account. Scholars accordingly often find the argument unconvincing, noting—among other things—the questionable nature of Paul’s proposed associations, the purportedly confused conflation of the free/slave antinomy with the flesh/promise antinomy, and the generally dubious value of allegory as a persuasive argument. They then typically account for the perceived “hermeneutical miracle”⁵ in Paul’s argument by identifying the passage as a forced response to the agitators’ position. Thus, C. K. Barrett, e.g., argues that this discussion of Abraham’s family “stands in the epistle because [Paul’s] opponents had used it and he could not escape it.”⁶

Since Ishmael’s circumcision would render his traditional identification with the gentiles⁷ irrelevant in an argument encouraging the gentiles to become sons of Abraham κατὰ Ἰσαάκ through circumcision / law observance,

3 For defense of 5:1 as the passage’s endpoint, see p. 327 below.

4 Paul does refer to Isaac and Ishmael as “sons” in 4:22 and in his citation of Gen 21:10 in Gal 4:30.

5 Hays, *Echoes*, 112.

6 Barrett, “Allegory,” 162. In favor of this interpretation, he also notes that γέγραπται in 4:22 introduces a *summary* of Gen 16–18, 21 wherein Paul uses anaphoric articles (τῆς παιδίσκης, τῆς ἐλευθέρας) and a lack of specific names (161). As Tolmie, *Persuading*, 166–67, observes, however, these factors truly signify only that Paul expects the Galatians to have a general familiarity with the Abrahamic story, not that the agitators have necessarily introduced it. The force of Barrett’s argument therefore rests on his contention that the “plain, surface meaning [of the Genesis account] supports not Paul but the Judaizers” (162). This chapter will dispute this contention.

7 Cf. *Jub.* 16:7–8; *Gen. Rab.* 45.8.

it remains unclear exactly why the agitators would have bothered to introduce Ishmael's story.⁸ Nevertheless, even—and perhaps especially—as a response to the agitators, Paul would need to present a cogent argument lest his inability to counter the agitators' position undermine the rest of his presentation.⁹ The unsupported brazenness that interpreters detect in 4:21–5:1 therefore seems at least as likely to indicate our misunderstanding of the argument as it does Paul's attempt to explain an unfavorable text.

Indeed, I suggest that the widespread perception of Paul's argument as problematical stems largely from two standard assumptions that Parts I and II of this book have called into question. First, scholars routinely assume that Paul understands the διαθήκαι in 4:24 as “covenants,” an assumption undermined by the argument in Part II that 3:15–4:11 uses διαθήκη in the sense of “testament.” Second, scholars also routinely assume that the slave/free and flesh/promise antinomies both map onto the same opposing columns, with the result that Paul's argument effectively divides Abrahamic descendants into two groups. In other words, regardless of whom they think the antinomies signify, scholars typically agree that the argument distinguishes Abraham's enslaved, fleshly children from his free, promissory children. Challenging this assumption, I have argued throughout that Paul's argument consistently distinguishes *three* groups of Abrahamic descendants: non-Christian Jews, Christian Jews, and Christian gentiles.

8 So Andrew C. Perriman, “The Rhetorical Strategy of Galatians 4:21–5:1,” *EvQ* 65 (1993): 27–42, 33; Siker, *Disinheriting*, 45; Cosgrove, “Law,” 223; Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 207 n. 51. Susan M. Elliott, “Choose Your Mother, Choose Your Master: Galatians 4:21–5:1 in the Shadow of the Anatolian Mother of the Gods,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 661–83, 664–65, similarly questions the nature of 4:21–5:1 as a response to the agitators on the grounds 1) that the introductory question in 4:21 seems to point the audience to a potentially decisive passage whose full significance they may not yet have grasped, 2) that the passage nowhere refers to the agitators' purported arguments, and 3) that it does not use technical expressions—such as περὶ δέ with a genitive—indicating a response to a report or question. Cf. Angela Standhartinger, “«Zur Freiheit . . . befreit»? Hagar im Galaterbrief,” *EvT* 62 (2002): 288–303, 289–92, who further notes that not only would the agitators have no reason to encourage the Galatians to become “children of Ishmael,” but the lack of overly negative appraisals of Hagar and Ishmael in contemporary ancient Judaism also makes it unlikely that they would present such “descent” as a negative motivation for change.

9 Similarly Cosgrove, “Law,” 221. Scholars sometimes suggest that the mere fact of Paul's response to the agitators would likely carry more weight with the Galatians than its actual content. See, e.g., Williams, *Galatians*, 126: “[T]he virtuosity he displayed as a ‘scripture expert’ would perhaps have had as great an effect as the actual persuasive power of his claims.” Aside from the perceived problematical nature of Paul's argument, however, we have little evidence to support such claims.

Part III accordingly examines these two assumptions, arguing that 4:21–5:1 becomes much more comprehensible as an attempt to persuade once we apply these insights. It begins in Chapter 7 by considering the identification of the two mothers as διαθήκαι in 4:24, suggesting that the passage contrasts two testaments—the adoptive Abrahamic testament and the nonadoptive Sinaitic testament—rather than two covenants. Chapter 8 then argues that Paul uses the slave/free typology to distinguish non-Christian Jews from Christian Jews and the flesh/promise typology to distinguish non-Christian Jews from Christian gentiles. The typology of the free children of promise then finds complete fulfillment only in the union of the Jewish children of the free woman with the gentile children of promise in Christ. Understood in this way, 4:21–5:1 presents a cogent argument that complements the previous discussions of Abrahamic descent in 3:6–14 and 3:15–4:11.

A Contrast of Testaments—Not Covenants—in 4:24–27

Gal 4:24–27

^{24a}ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα· ^bαὗται γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, ^cμία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ, εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ^dἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ. ^{25a}τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ, ^bσυστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, ^cδουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. ^{26a}ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, ^bἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν· ²⁷γέγραπται γάρ, Εὐφράνθητι, στείρα ἢ οὐ τίκτους· ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἢ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα· ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα.

^{24a}*These things are being interpreted allegorically, ^bfor these [women] are two testaments, ^cone indeed from Mt. Sinai bearing children into slavery, ^dwhich is Hagar. ^{25a}And this Hagar-Sinai mountain is in Arabia, ^bbut it aligns with the present Jerusalem, ^cfor [the present Jerusalem] is enslaved with her children ^{26a}whereas the Jerusalem above is free. ^bThis [Jerusalem above] is our mother, ²⁷for it is written, “Rejoice barren one who does not bear! Break forth and shout, you who do not suffer birth pains! Because more are the children of the desolate one than of the one having a husband.”*

Paul begins his figurative explanation (γάρ) of Abraham’s familial situation by identifying the two mothers as διαθήκαι. The vast majority of interpreters render διαθήκαι here as “covenants,” a view that the ensuing identification of

Hagar with the Sinaitic διαθήκη in 4:24–25 might at first seem to support.¹⁰ I argued in Part II, however, that the instances of διαθήκη in 3:15 and 3:17 both signify Hellenistic testaments rather than Jewish covenants. The proposed importance of this reading for the entire argument in 3:15–4:11 then suggests that διαθήκαι carries this same significance in 4:24.¹¹ In other words, 4:24–27 does not contrast two covenants but two testaments: the nonadoptive Sinaitic testament and the adoptive Abrahamic testament.

This proposed testamentary emphasis has an early advocate in Jerome, who similarly contends that the passage contrasts the mere bestowal of a legacy with full testamentary heirship.¹² Within the text, it finds initial support in the link that 4:30 draws between the statuses of these two mothers and the inheritance (or lack thereof) that their respective sons receive; as noted in Chapter 4, the concept of inheritance pertains much more closely to a testament than a covenant. Several other considerations provide more substantial confirmation.

First, a covenantal reading naturally gives rise to the assumption that the Jewish law constitutes the enslaving force in 4:21–5:1. This reading, however, creates many of the exegetical difficulties that lead scholars to find this passage so

10 E.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 300; de Boer, *Galatians*, 294. Betz, *Galatians*, 244, goes even further, identifying διαθήκη here as “a world order decreed by divine institution; it contains God’s definition of the basis and purpose of human life.”

11 Cf. Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 321 n. 26: “Paulus gebraucht den Term διαθήκη in Gal dreimal (3, 15.17; 4, 24), an keiner Stelle dabei in der Bedeutung von ‘Bund’, sondern von ‘Testament’, ‘Verordnung.’” Gijs Bouwman, “Die Hagar- und Sara-Perikope (Gal 4,21–31): Exemplarische Interpretation zum Schriftbeweis bei Paulus,” *ANRW* 2.25.4 (1987): 3135–55, 3145–46, similarly interprets the διαθήκαι as “testaments” based largely on his observation that בְּרִית never appears in the plural. He then attributes the unusual characterization of the Sinaitic διαθήκη as a testament to Paul’s co-opting the language of the agitators’ argument, which Bouwman suggests likely pointed to Gen 15:8 as establishing a testament bequeathing the Arabian lands—“from the river of Egypt to the great river”; contrast 17:8 which specifies Canaan as the land of inheritance—to Ishmael.

12 Jerome, *Comm. Gal.*, CCL 77A.137.40–44: “And just as gifts [dona] are one thing, the estate [substantia] another, legacies [legata] one thing, the inheritance [haereditas] another (for we read to the sons of Abraham’s concubines gifts were bequeathed [dona tradita], but to the son of Sarah the inheritance of the whole estate was left [totius substantiae haereditatem relictam]), so to be, as we say, a blessing together with legacies [benedictionem atque legata] is one thing, a testament [testamentum] another.” Jerome, however, identifies the counterpart to the Sinaitic διαθήκη as Christ’s new διαθήκη rather than the Abrahamic διαθήκη. For the problematical nature of this identification, see p. 302 below. He also locates this distinction in Genesis, whereas I derive my distinction from the nature of the two διαθήκαι alone since Genesis does not speak of two διαθήκαι.

problematical. As I hope to show below, these difficulties disappear if the passage instead understands the στοιχεία as the enslaving force, an understanding that in turn favors a testamentary interpretation of διαθήκη. Second and more decisively, the possibility that Paul has an adoptive testament in view explains how the citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 can portray the Jerusalem above as a barren woman who suddenly finds herself with many offspring despite bearing no children (ἡ οὐ τίκτουςα) and suffering no birth pangs (ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα): the city/woman gains her offspring through adoption. This interpretation then helps to resolve the many exegetical problems that trouble traditional interpretations of the Isaianic citation. Finally, a testamentary reading enables the women to function as types of Abrahamic descent, thereby eliminating the unpersuasive and problematical arbitrariness associated with more allegorical interpretations. This chapter will consider each of these three points in turn. I will consider a fourth point in favor of this interpretation—namely, its ability to make sense of the contrast Paul draws between the Sinaitic and Abrahamic διαθήκαι—in Chapter 8.

The Sinaitic διαθήκη: A Nonadoptive Testament Failing to Liberate Its Charges from the στοιχεία

Having identified the “slave” and “free” mothers as two διαθήκαι in Gal 4:24b, Paul immediately focuses on the “one from Mount Sinai bearing children into slavery, “which is Hagar” (μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ, εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ἣτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ, 4:24c–d).¹³ Although the reference to “bearing into slavery” could indicate that μία specifies “one” of the mothers,¹⁴ the fronting of the phrase “from Mount Sinai,” the closer proximity of the immediately preceding

13 Whether ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ modifies the μία διαθήκη or, as Steven Di Mattei, “Paul’s Allegory of the Two Covenants (Gal 4.21–31) in Light of First-Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 102–22, 110, suggests, γεννώσα—“one [διαθήκη] bearing children from Mt. Sinai into servitude”—ultimately makes little difference to the argument since both effectively associate the διαθήκη with Sinai. Nevertheless, the focus on distinguishing the two διαθήκαι and the fronting of ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ immediately after μία establish the former as the preferable reading.

14 So, e.g., J. C. O’Neill, “For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia’ (Galatians 4.25),” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. L. North* (ed. Steve Moyise; JSNTsup 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 210–19, 212–13; Bruce, *Galatians*, 219. O’Neill’s reading that “Hagar bears unto slavery because she bears out of sight of Sinai [ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ]” (213) results in a pairing of freedom with Sinai that he can sustain only through a convoluted series of conjectures and amended readings.

διαθήκαι, and—as I will argue below—the inability to identify an alternative basis for the Hagar-Sinai connection all suggest that it instead signifies “one” of the δύο διαθήκαι.¹⁵ The verse thus characterizes the Sinaitic διαθήκη as “bearing into slavery.” This characterization, however, raises the question of what, exactly, enslaves the children of the Sinaitic διαθήκη, a question whose answer helps determine whether 4:24 uses διαθήκη in a covenantal or a testamentary sense. To see why, we must first consider the different nuances inherent in these two readings.

A covenant binds its consenting parties into a relationship with obligations that, once accepted, cannot be broken without incurring the covenant’s various stipulated curses.¹⁶ A nonadoptive testament, in contrast, does not establish an ongoing relationship—it does not even take effect until after a testator’s death—but rather specifies the beneficiaries who inherit a testator’s estate. Accordingly, whereas a covenantal understanding of the Sinaitic διαθήκη would emphasize the relationship with God that Abrahamic descent makes possible, a testamentary understanding of the διαθήκη would emphasize the Abrahamic descent that God chooses to bless with an inheritance. These differing emphases then enable us to gauge how well a particular reading of διαθήκη fits into Paul’s actual argument. That 4:21–31 focuses on Abrahamic descent rather than on relationship to God, for instance, favors a testamentary view.

Because it affects the argument’s perceived logic, the nature of the Sinaitic enslavement provides a potentially more significant indication of how Paul understands the διαθήκη. Scholars typically assume that the διαθήκη enslaves its children to the law, a reading that arises naturally from a covenantal view in which “birth” signifies induction into Israel’s unique relationship to God. The characterization of this birth as being “into slavery” would accordingly emphasize the obligations—i.e., the law—necessarily incurred by the inductees. In contrast, a testamentary view in which “birth” signifies descent from the human Abraham would suggest that the Sinaitic διαθήκη gives birth into the same human enslavement to the στοιχέια that 4:1–11 envisions. In this section, I accordingly argue for the testamentary nature of the Sinaitic διαθήκη by demonstrating that 4:24–27 presumes an enslavement to the στοιχέια rather than to the law.

15 A common conclusion for which Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 35–36, presents a particularly thorough case. He notes that Paul’s preference for ἥτις over ἥ could support this position as well if it signifies “‘which,’ pointing thus to the quality expressed in the antecedent clause” (35).

16 On the nature of covenants, see Hahn, *Kinship*, 28–31, 259–60.

The Enslavement Associated with the Sinaitic διαθήκη

Several lines of evidence indicate that the slavery into which the Sinaitic διαθήκη gives birth represents an enslavement to the στοιχεῖα rather than the law. Starting with more general considerations, Paul's description of the law's commandments as "holy and righteous and good" in Rom 7:12 suggests that the negative portrayal of God's law as a slave master presiding over hapless charges would trouble him as much as it would the agitators.¹⁷ To be sure, interpreters often contend that Gal 3–4 characterizes the law more perniciously, with 3:19–20 even calling the law's divine origin into question. I have argued throughout, however, that although Jesus' death and resurrection have caused Paul to shift his understanding of the law's ultimate function, he nevertheless maintains a high view of the law—a view consistent with his Jewish upbringing, with his later comments in Romans, and with his desire to present a persuasive argument in Galatians—even in Gal 3–4. The preceding arguments in Galatians therefore do not prepare a reader for an overly negative portrayal of the law in 4:24–27.

Indeed, the only negative type of slavery that the letter has mentioned thus far is the general human slavery to the στοιχεῖα in 4:1–11.¹⁸ Even when Paul relates the Galatians' potential law observance to slavery in 4:9–11, he portrays it as a return to an enslavement under the στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖα, οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεῦειν θέλετε, 4:9). Galatians 5:1 similarly urges the gentile Galatians not to submit "again" (πάλιν) to a yoke of slavery by taking up the law, thereby invoking their previous enslavement to the στοιχεῖα as at least equivalent to, and possibly identical with, the slavery discussed in 4:21–31.¹⁹ The use of συστοιχεῖ

17 Romans 7:12–14 also makes it clear that sin—not the law—constitutes the enslaving power in this passage. Paul can, of course, refer to slavery to Christ / righteousness / obedience as a good thing (cf. Gal 1:10; Rom 6:16–18), but slavery clearly has negative connotations in Gal 4:21–31.

18 Significantly, although a παιδαγωγός usually was a slave, the portrayal of the law as a παιδαγωγός in 3:24–25 paints the law's charges as minors, not slaves. When Paul does speak of the Jews as enslaved in their minority in 4:3, he speaks of their enslavement under the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, not the law.

19 Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 144–46. Bachmann ultimately suggests that, although the current crisis over circumcision leads Paul to frame his argument using traditional Jewish symbols, in reality he attacks not Judaism but slavery (151). So, too, Robert L. Brawley, "Contextuality, Intertextuality, and the Hendiadic Relationship of Promise and Law in Galatians," *ZNW* 93 (2002): 99–119, 115: "the passage has the deliberative rhetorical force of admonishing Paul's gentile readers not to return to the στοιχεῖα." Indeed, if 5:1 envisions an enslavement to the law, then the "again" must signify 1) that Paul subsumes the law under the στοιχεῖα, 2) that the Galatians are former God-fearers who partially observed the law

in 4:25 would likely also remind the Galatians of the overarching theme of slavery to the στοιχεῖα.²⁰

Moving to 4:24–27 itself, these verses never mention νόμος, a curious omission if the law forms a primary target of Paul's argument.²¹ Or again, Paul states only that the Sinaitic διαθήκη “[gives] birth into slavery” (εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα), not that it enslaves. The parallel with Hagar as a mother could admittedly account for the circumlocution, but even this parallel argues against the portrayal of an enslaving διαθήκη: in Greco-Roman society, the son of a slave woman became a slave not *to* his mother but *because* of his mother, i.e., because he inherits her enslaved status.²² The διαθήκη thus makes a better parallel with Hagar if it perpetuates Abraham's human enslavement to the στοιχεῖα. In other words, the connection to Hagar suggests that the Sinaitic διαθήκη's “giving birth into slavery” signifies a failure to liberate rather than a propensity to enslave.

This characterization of the Sinaitic διαθήκη as giving birth into slavery creates another problem for the view of the law as enslaving. Interpreters often assume that the characterization arises as an inference from the διαθήκη's association with Hagar.²³ That the birthing-into-slavery characterization in 4:24c precedes the διαθήκη's identification with Hagar in 4:24d provides an initial reason to question this scenario. Even more troubling, the validity of

before, or 3) that 4:21–5:1 addresses the Jewish agitators rather than the gentile Galatians. (For the first two options, see Williams, *Galatians*, 132; for the third, see Martin, “Apostasy,” 454–55.) The awkwardness disappears if the law instead enslaves one to the στοιχεῖα. On the yoke metaphor, see Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ζυγός, ἐτεροζυγέω,” *TDNT* 2:896–901, 899.

20 Cf. Standhartinger, “Zur Freiheit,” 294, 296–97.

21 In a slight wordplay, νόμος does occur twice in 4:21, designating the law proper in its first instance and the Pentateuch in its second. Although this opening invocation of νόμος does suggest that 4:21–5:1 somehow associates the law with slavery, it does not thereby require that the law function as the enslaving force in the allegory. Cf. Gal 4:8–11 (where coming under law enslaves one to the στοιχεῖα) and Rom 7 (where an enslaving sin twists the good law to its purposes).

22 As Ramsay, *Galatians*, 433–34, notes, Abraham's assumption that Ishmael would be his heir and the inclusion of Dan and Naphtali (born to Rachel's maid Bilhah, Gen 30:3–8) and Gad and Asher (born to Leah's maid Zilpah, 30:9–13) among the twelve patriarchs suggest that Jews traditionally regarded sons born to a man's slaves as (free) sons of the father. In both Greek and Roman law, however, such sons would inherit the slave status of their mother. Cf. Lührmann, *Galatians*, 90; Elliott, “Choose,” 666 n. 19. As evidence for the principle in Greek law, Ramsay points to inscriptions from Edessa or Salonika enfranchising “my slave born of my maidservant” (434 n. 1). He also points to laws in the fifth century CE Syro-Roman lawbook treating the children of dowry slaves as property (L. §105 and 123, cited in Mitteis, *Reichsrecht*, 241).

23 Noted explicitly by, e.g., Barrett, “Allegory,” 164.

this characterization as an inference depends entirely on the legitimacy of the underlying association between the Sinaitic διαθήκη and Hagar, an equally controversial association that, in this reading, Gal 4:25a—τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ—must justify. Galatians 4:25a, however, hardly presents a clear and compelling case for identifying Hagar with Sinai.²⁴

Scholars focus on two aspects of 4:25a as potential keys to the Hagar-Sinai identification. Some point to the neuter article τὸ before the normally feminine Ἀγάρ as evidence that Paul here treats “Hagar” strictly as a word/name. The name then becomes the key to connecting the woman with “Mount Sinai in Arabia,” usually either through a reference to the Nabatean center of *el-heḡr* (Nabatean-Aramaic: 𐤇𐤁𐤂𐤓) in northwest Arabia (modern day Madain Saleh)²⁵ or—more commonly suggested—through a Semitic wordplay linking “Hagar” (הגרה) with the Arabic word for “rock” (*ḥadjar*), a name by which Paul could have heard the mountain called during his time in Arabia (cf. 1:17).²⁶ Neither

24 So, e.g., Schlier, *Galater*, 220: the logic in 4:25a grounding Hagar’s connection to Sinai “dunkel bleiben.” The extensive textual variations in the opening conjunction and the inclusion/omission of Ἀγάρ testify to the difficulties that even relatively early interpreters had in understanding 4:25a.

25 Hartmut Gese, “τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ (Gal 4 25),” in *Das Ferne und nahe Wort: Festschrift Leonhard Rost zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 30. November 1966 gewidmet* (ed. Fritz Maass; BZAW 105; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), 81–94, 91–94, followed by Lührmann, *Galatians*, 90. For a thorough refutation, see G. I. Davies, “Hagar, el-Heḡra and the Location of Mount Sinai: With an Additional Note on Reqem,” *VT* 22 (1972): 152–63, 152–60. Martin McNamara, “τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ” (Gal. 4:25): Paul and Petra,” *Mils* 2 (1978): 24–41, and Michael G. Steinhauser, “Gal 4,25a: Evidence of Targumic Tradition in Gal 4,21–31?,” *Bib* 70 (1989): 234–40, each ground the Hagar-Sinai connection in the Jewish targumic traditions that render the road to שׁוּר where the angel finds Hagar in Gen 16:7 as the road to 𐤇𐤁𐤂𐤓, although McNamara argues that the tradition therefore identifies Hagar with Reqem/Petra (i.e., שׁוּר) and not, as Gese interprets this evidence, with *el-heḡr* (35). McNamara also concludes that the Galatians “[probably did not] understand such a reference to Jewish tradition” (36). Cf. Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 111–12; Tolmie, *Persuading*, 173; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 211–12.

26 So, e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* (PG 61.662.34–35); Luther, *Galatians*, 291–92; Becker, “Galater,” 72; Daniel Hayden King, “Paul and the Tannaim: A Study in Galatians,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 340–70, 368; Betz, *Galatians*, 244–45; Meyer, “Galatians,” 203–4. In support of this reading, Ellicott, *Galatians*, 111, interprets ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ as “among the Arabians”; Oepke, *Galater*, 149, as “in der arabischen Sprache.” As Schlier, *Galater*, 220, notes, however, the proposed wordplay does not require such deviations from the straightforward understanding of ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ as “im Lande Arabien.” For extended critique of the wordplay, see Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 194–98. J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Theologische Bibliotheek 24; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1954), 109–10, connects Hagar with the Hebrew הָרָר instead. The complicated proposal of Gerhard Sellin,

of these proposals seems intrinsically probable: the Arabic *h* corresponds to the Hebrew ה rather than the ה,²⁷ not to mention that the Greek-speaking Galatians would be unlikely to perceive either of these unmentioned connections. Furthermore, given the explicit Hagar-Sinai identification in 4:24d, the neuter τὸ more likely identifies Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ as a complex modifier of the neuter ὄρος: “this Hagar-Sinai mountain.”²⁸ As Andrew Perriman observes, not only does this explanation of the article account for Paul’s otherwise curious placement of Σινᾶ before ὄρος,²⁹ but it also effectively resolves the awkwardness of having Hagar identified both as the διαθήκη from Mount Sinai (4:24) and as Mount Sinai itself (4:25).³⁰

“Hagar und Sara. Religionsgeschichtliche Hintergründe der Schriftallegorese Gal 4,21–31,” in *Das Urchristentum in seiner literarischen Geschichte: Festschrift für Jürgen Becker zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. Ulrich Mell and Ulrich B. Müller; BZNW 100; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 59–84, 74–75, in which 4:25a potentially combines the etymological understanding of Hagar as a “Foreigner” (גַּר; cf. Philo, *Congr.* 20), the name of Moses’ son (מֹרְשֵׁם) signifying Moses’ status as a “foreigner” (Exod 2:22), and a tradition identifying Moses’ time in Midian / at Mt. Horeb (i.e., Sinai) in Exod 2:15–4:20 as his being “in Arabia” (so Philo, *Mos.* 1.47) seems even less tenable.

27 According to Betz, *Galatians*, 245, this lack of correspondence in the Hebrew, “not to mention the Greek, would not bother a man who is absorbed with ‘allegory’ and who would be guided even by the most superficial similarities.” The text hardly justifies this characterization of Paul.

28 So, e.g., Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 37–38; Moo, *Galatians*, 302. Cf. Tolmie, *Persuading*, 172; Dunn, *Galatians*, 251. As Perriman notes, the suggestion that the neuter article instead identifies Ἀγὰρ as a quotation from the preceding verse (e.g., BDF §267.1) would indicate that “Mount Sinai” could take the place of Ἀγὰρ in 4:24, a patently absurd reading (37). The use of feminine articles with the two Jerusalems—τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλὴμ / ἡ . . . ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ—similarly undermines Lightfoot’s alternative proposal that the article identifies Ἀγὰρ as an “object of thought or speech” and, thus, as an allegorical entity (Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 193).

29 The Σινᾶ ὄρος ordering does not appear in Gal 4:24c, in the two other NT references (Acts 7:30, 38), or in any of the 17 LXX references to Mount Sinai: Exod 19:11, 16, 18, 20, 23; 24:16; 31:18; 34:2, 4, 32; Lev 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34; Num 3:1; 28:6; and 2 Esd 19:13. Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 37 n. 25, explains the one apparent exception to the seemingly “universal rule” that the name of the mountain comes second—“Ὡς τὸ ὄρος” (“Mt. Hor”) in, e.g., Num 20:22, 23—on the grounds that the underlying Hebrew (הַר הֹרֵ) constitutes a “certain idiomatic oddity.” Defending the wordplay interpretation, Meyer, “Galatians,” 203, instead suggests that Paul inverts the normal order of Σινᾶ and ὄρος in order to juxtapose the mountain’s two names. Zahn, *Galater*, 235–36, suggests that the inverted order serves to contrast Sinai with another mountain, namely, Zion.

30 Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 37–38.

Given these difficulties with a lexical explanation, other scholars—often those who prefer the textual form in which 4:25 does not contain the word Ἀγάρ³¹—point to the introduction of Arabia as the key to Paul’s identification of Hagar with Sinai. Such explanations typically argue that the mountain’s location outside the promised land corresponds to Hagar’s outsider status³² or that Jewish tradition places Hagar’s descendants in that general area (cf. Gen 25:12–18; 1 Chr 5:10, 19–20; Ps 83:6; Bar 3:22–23; Josephus, *A. J.* 1.220).³³ The preference for the omission of Ἀγάρ in 4:25a also enables a few scholars to argue that, by virtue either of its distance from the promised land or of its association with a slave’s descendants, Sinai’s Arabian location justifies the διαθήκη’s slave-bearing nature in 4:24 rather than its identification with Hagar.³⁴ Since neither the giving of the law outside the promised land nor the settlement patterns of Hagar’s progeny have anything to do with whether or not the Sinaitic διαθήκη gives birth to slaves, this latter variation attributes a rather serious (and obvious) non sequitur to Paul. Regardless, as with the interpretations based on τὸ Ἀγάρ, all of these proposals require that the gentile Galatians complete the argument by supplying an obscure missing step.

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- 31 Finding the external evidence inconclusive, most recent scholars rightly opt for the inclusion of Ἀγάρ based on internal considerations. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 527, who credits the omission to parablepsis. My suggestion that 4:25c connects the present Jerusalem to the enslaved Hagar (and, through her, to Sinai; see pp. 271–73 below) also offers fairly strong internal evidence for the inclusion of Ἀγάρ: it offers evidence of Hagar’s role in an argument whose unconventional nature makes it unlikely that Christian scribes would have introduced the name had it not originally appeared.
- 32 Meyer, “Galatians,” 204 n. 5, lists Wieseler, Lachmann, and Hofmann as proponents of this view. He then notes that Paul could have focused attention on the outsider status more clearly by replacing/supplementing the reference to Arabia with ἔξω (or μακρὰν ἀπὸ) τῆς γῆς Χαναάν.
- 33 So Theodoret, *Commentarius*, 354; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 193; Lagrange, *Galates*, 125; Matera, *Galatians*, 170; Byrne, *Sons*, 187 n. 85. Focusing on Hagar as a symbol for Jewish proselytism, Peder Borgen, “Some Hebrew and Pagan Features in Philo’s and Paul’s Interpretation of Hagar and Ishmael,” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (eds. Peder Borgen and Søren Giversen; Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 151–64, 159–60, suggests that 4:25a highlights not just the pagan “background” that Hagar and Sinai share, but also their both coming to be associated with the Jewish law. Although Borgen bases his conception of Hagar as the quintessential proselyte on Philo’s portrayal (cf. *Abr.* 251), we have little evidence suggesting that this view was widespread enough for Paul’s audience to make these implicit connections.
- 34 For location outside the promised land, see Zahn, *Galater*, 236; Simon Légasse, *L’Épître de Paul aux Galates* (LDC 9; Paris: Cerf, 2000), 356–57. For the proximity of Hagar’s bondslave descendants, see Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 194.

Finally, acknowledging 4:25a as a ground for the identification whose significance has become obscure, Charles Cosgrove argues that 4:25b–c functions as a second ground by pointing to the “spiritual slavery” of the preeminent Torah-based community, namely, present Jerusalem. That Paul simply asserts rather than proves the present Jerusalem’s enslavement need not trouble the argument, suggests Cosgrove, since the Galatians would surely readily acknowledge the city’s condition given the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and their law-based persecution of Christians (cf. 4:29).³⁵ This proposal would have more traction if Paul actually connected persecution with the enslaved state of the persecutors. Instead, Cosgrove’s portrayal of present Jerusalem’s enslavement as a spiritual blindness seems to presuppose an enslavement to sin—a theme in Rom 7:14–25 but not in Galatians—rather than an enslavement to either the law or the στοιχία.

The incomplete and often problematical nature of all these explanations suggests that 4:25a does not ground the Hagar-Sinai connection.³⁶ Fortunately, the need for 4:25a to ground the Hagar-Sinai connection arises only if the characterization of the Sinaitic διαθήκη as giving birth into slavery represents an *inference* from the διαθήκη’s association with Hagar.³⁷ In truth, this characterization provides a perfectly sufficient *basis* for the διαθήκη’s linkage with Hagar, the mother characterized solely as “the slave woman” (ἡ παιδίσκη, 4:22–23). Further supporting slavery as the underlying link, 4:25 explicitly identifies the present Jerusalem’s enslaved state as Paul’s reason for identifying it with the Hagar-Sinai mountain. Slavery thus forms the common factor—the so-called *tertium comparationis*—uniting the three.³⁸

This reading requires that the enslaved status of Sinai’s children in 4:24c stand, as the order of the clauses suggests, as an independent premise. A reference to an enslaving law, however, fits poorly with this conclusion. That Paul would simply presume the enslaving status of the law seems unlikely given

35 Cosgrove, “Law,” 229–30. For critique of the alternative suggestion that present Jerusalem’s enslavement derives from the city’s subordination to Rome, see pp. 272–73.

36 The γάρ that connects 4:25 to 4:24 in many manuscripts would argue against this conclusion, but the γάρ seems unlikely to be original: the inclusion of P⁴⁶ alongside A, B, and D tips the manuscript evidence in favor of δέ as the original conjunction (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 527, who grounds the Committee’s preference for δέ in its “superior attestation”), and the (mistaken) assumption that 4:25a provides the purportedly missing justification for the Hagar-Sinai association can readily explain a scribal switch to γάρ.

37 For my understanding of the role that 4:25a does play in the argument, see pp. 271–73.

38 So, e.g., Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 323; Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 35–36, 39.

the controversial nature of such a claim.³⁹ A few scholars accordingly adopt this understanding of the Hagar-Sinai connection on the grounds that 3:19–4:11 has already established the law’s enslaving nature,⁴⁰ but my analysis of those verses in Part II argues otherwise. Galatians 4:1–3 has, however, already identified the Jews as sharing in humanity’s enslavement to the στοιχεία. Combined with its less controversial nature that renders further justification unnecessary, an enslavement to the στοιχεία therefore supports the independence of Paul’s claim in 4:24c in a way that an enslavement to the law cannot.

To summarize, the prior discussion of slavery to the στοιχεία in 4:1–11, the lack of νόμος language in 4:24–27, the characterization of the Sinaitic διαθήκη as “giving birth into slavery” rather than as “enslaving,” and the lack of explicit support for this characterization all suggest that Paul has an enslavement to the στοιχεία in view rather than an enslavement to the law. To unite these somewhat disconnected observations into a compelling whole, however, I still need to show how such an understanding of the Sinaitic enslavement functions in the flow of Paul’s argument. I accordingly now turn to this task.

Situating a Sinaitic Enslavement to the στοιχεία in the Flow of Paul’s Argument

How do the Sinaitic διαθήκη and its enslaved children fit into Paul’s argument? The answer depends, of course, on what Paul is actually arguing and how he relates the enslavements associated with the Sinaitic διαθήκη and the present Jerusalem. Determining whether he uses Sinai to connect Hagar to the

39 Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 110 n. 30, suggests that εἰς δουλείαν does not associate the law with “slavery” but with “servitude,” “a notion certainly not contradictory to Judaism.” This distinction seems questionable in light of the διαθήκη’s connection with the slave woman Hagar and the enslaved present Jerusalem, not to mention the contrast of this group with the free Jerusalem above in 4:26–27.

40 E.g., Witherington, *Grace*, 330; Ingo Broer, “‘Vertreibe die Magd und ihren Sohn!’: Gal 4,21–31 im Horizont der Debatte über Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament,” in *Der bezwingende Vorsprung des Guten: Exegetische und theologische Werkstattberichte: FS Wolfgang Harnisch* (eds. Ulrich Schoenborn and Stephan Pfürtnner; Theologie 1; Münster: Lit, 1994), 167–98, 182; Stephen Fowl, “Who Can Read Abraham’s Story?: Allegory and Interpretive Power in Galatians,” *JSNT* 55 (1994): 77–95, 87; Hansen, *Galatians*, 144–45; Lührmann, *Galatians*, 90. Scholars most commonly ground this position in the portrayal of the law as a παιδαγωγός in 3:24–25 and the apparent linking of the law with an enslavement under the στοιχεία in 4:3, 10–11. See, e.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 250.

present Jerusalem,⁴¹ uses the present Jerusalem to connect Hagar to Sinai,⁴² uses slavery to connect Hagar to both Sinai and the present Jerusalem independently,⁴³ or—the option for which I will argue below—uses Hagar/slavery to connect Sinai to the present Jerusalem⁴⁴ therefore constitutes a critical task since each of these scenarios interprets Paul's assumptions and aims differently.

Discerning between these four options requires that we understand the flow of the argument. In particular, we need to understand the role of 4:25a, which, following immediately after the identification of the Sinaitic διαθήκη with Hagar in 4:24, locates this Hagar-Sinai mountain in Arabia: τὸ δὲ Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ. Interpreters have proposed several possible functions for this claim.⁴⁵ I have already shown that 4:25a cannot ground Hagar's association with the Sinaitic διαθήκη or establish the διαθήκη's slave-bearing status without presuming significant steps and/or raising logical problems.⁴⁶ Explanations involving *gematria* calculations⁴⁷ or considerations of lexical

41 E.g., Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 323–24. Cf. Guy Wagner, “Les enfants d'Abraham ou les chemins de la promesse et de la liberté: Exégèse de Galates 4,21 à 31,” *RHPR* 71 (1991): 285–95, 292.

42 Cosgrove, “Law,” 229–30.

43 E.g., Longenecker, *Galatians*, 211–13.

44 So also Martyn, *Galatians*, 438–39, although his understanding of the argument has only this superficial agreement with the understanding for which I will argue.

45 An inability to find a compelling reason for 4:25a has led to the suggestions that it represents “a later gloss” (Burton, *Galatians*, 259–61); an “afterthought by Paul in case any of his audiences did not know where Mount Sinai was” (Dunn, *Galatians*, 251–52); or simply a reiteration of the (just made) Hagar-Sinai connection (Fung, *Galatians*, 208; Bruce, *Galatians*, 219; Willitts, “Context,” 202–3).

46 See pp. 260–66.

47 R. A. Lipsius, *Briefe an die Galater, Römer, Philipper* (2d rev. ed.; HKNT 2.2; Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1892), 55, notes that “this (i.e., present) Jerusalem” (ירושלם הזאת), “the mother from Mount Sinai who gives birth into slavery” (אם היא מהר סיני יולדת לעבודה), and “Hagar is a mountain in Arabia” (הגר הר הוא שבערב) all have a *gematria* value of 999. In contrast, “that (i.e., future) Jerusalem” (ירושלם ההיא) and “Sarah our mother” (שרי אמנו) both total 607. Of course, the Greek phrases in 4:24–27 at best paraphrase these expressions. In rebuttal, Lietzmann, *Galater*, 31–32, observes both that none of the actual Greek phrases have matching *gematria* values and that ἱσχυρὸς—not, contra Lipsius, συστοιχέω—would be the Greek word for designating this type of argument. Paul seems unlikely to have expected the Greek-speaking Galatians not only to discern the presence of but also to reconstruct such an argument.

gender⁴⁸ prove similarly problematical and have rightly found little traction in the scholarly literature.

One interpretation that has found some traction regards the mention of Arabia simply as an ironic reminder that the Sinaitic διαθήκη itself hails from outside the Promised Land.⁴⁹ Galatians 4:25a could function this way as part of a parenthetical aside. Franz Mußner's observation that the mention of Arabia creates a geographical contrast with the immediately ensuing mention of Jerusalem, however, suggests that the claim has a more integral role. Indeed, 4:25a even seems to share a subject with the subsequent clause: "25a and this Hagar-Sinai mountain is in Arabia ^bbut aligns with the present Jerusalem."⁵⁰

To what end does Paul contrast Arabia and Jerusalem in 4:25? Mußner's proposal that 4:25a seeks to acknowledge—and thereby diminish—a potential objection to the mountain's linkage with the present Jerusalem suffers from two fatal difficulties.⁵¹ First, as Cosgrove observes, Paul himself creates this geographical "problem" by needlessly introducing Sinai into the argument in the first place: he could easily have avoided the problem simply by referring to ὁ νόμος or to the Mosaic διαθήκη.⁵² Second, neither non-Christian Jews, nor the agitators, nor the Galatians they have persuaded would dispute the connection of the Sinaitic διαθήκη with Jerusalem.⁵³ Indeed, the agitators' argument

48 Udo Borse, *Der Brief an die Galater* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1984), 171, suggests that the lexically feminine Ἀραβία connects the lexically neuter Σινᾶ ὄρος with the lexically feminine Ἀγάρ, Sinaitic διαθήκη, and present Ἱερουσαλήμ. Even granting the questionable necessity of this gender agreement, Paul could have avoided the problem altogether simply by eliminating the, in this reading, unnecessary references to the mountain.

49 E.g., Calvin, "Galatians," 139; Bonnard, "Galates," 97; Witherington, *Grace*, 333. Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 438 n. 136.

50 So, e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 303. Interpreting 4:24d-25a as parenthetical, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 181, suggests that μία διαθήκη from 4:24c constitutes the subject of συστοιχεῖ in 4:25b. A few scholars (e.g., Matera, *Galatians*, 169–70) argue for a change in subject from "Hagar" in 4:25a to "Mount Sinai" in 4:25b. The justification for 4:25b in 4:25c, however, would then rather nonsensically imply that Mount Sinai (or the Sinaitic διαθήκη) was itself in slavery. Reading the subject of 4:25a as "this Hagar-Sinai mountain" also eliminates the possibility of this change in subject.

51 Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 323–24. Cf. Hays, "Galatians," 303; Williams, *Galatians*, 128; Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 177–78. O'Neill, "Hagar," 215, argues for a contrast of the "desert" Arabia with the "city" of present Jerusalem, but his suggestion that Sinai therefore aligns with the Jerusalem above cannot make sense of the rest of 4:24–27 without O'Neill's substantial alterations to the text.

52 Cosgrove, "Law," 227.

53 Cf. *ibid.*, 229.

presumably depends on this connection. Hagar therefore represents the controversial element in this triad, but she does not create the tie to Arabia.

These two objections point to two seemingly odd features of Paul's argument for which any proposed interpretation must account. On the one hand, explanations need to address the introduction of Mount Sinai. Interpretations that view Mount Sinai as opposing a corresponding mountain—usually identified as Mt. Zion—aligned with Sarah⁵⁴ founder on the fact that Paul mentions no other mountain in 4:26–27, i.e., he never completes this proposed contrast. Susan Elliott accordingly appeals to the Galatians' pagan past to explain Sinai's presence, arguing that it enables Paul to present Hagar as an instantiation of the Mountain Mother of the Gods, an entity often associated with law.⁵⁵ Although Elliott draws a string of potentially illuminating parallels between this goddess worship and the portrayal of the Sinaitic διαθήκη / present Jerusalem in 4:24–25,⁵⁶ her proposal nevertheless suffers from its completely implicit nature: not once does Paul explicitly address the goddess cult. We should prefer interpretations capable of explaining Sinai's explicit function in the text, namely, associating its διαθήκη with Arabia.⁵⁷

On the other hand, given the natural alignment of the Sinaitic διαθήκη with the present Jerusalem, explanations of Paul's argument must also account for his explicit defense of this connection in 4:25c: δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ.⁵⁸ That is to say, of all the passage's potentially controversial claims, why does Paul choose to justify this seemingly straightforward association of Sinai and Jerusalem? Some interpreters simply deny that 4:25c connects these two

54 See, e.g., Zahn, *Galater*, 236; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 213–14. F. S. Malan, "The Strategy of Two Opposing Covenants: Galatians 4:21–5:1," *Neot* 26 (1992): 425–40, 432, suggests Golgotha as the counterpart to Sinai.

55 Elliott, "Choose," 676–82.

56 See especially the chart in *ibid.*, 679.

57 In Elliott's reading, Arabia "becomes an incidental detail, rather than an explanatory one." See *ibid.*, 678 n. 59. The implicit nature of the proposed argument would also render the—in this reading—ungrounded association of Hagar with Sinai rhetorically dangerous. That is to say, Elliott argues that Paul portrays the Mountain Mother as the slave Hagar in order to demean the goddess and reduce her appeal (681), but the agitators could simply argue instead that Mount Sinai rightly corresponds to Sarah, thereby turning any implicit connections between the law and an appealing goddess cult into a positive reason for accepting the Jewish law.

58 As Martyn, *Galatians*, 439, notes, the contrast with the free ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ in 4:26 identifies the subject of δουλεύει in 4:25c as νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ.

entities.⁵⁹ Cosgrove, for instance, argues that Hagar must be the sole subject of συστοιχεῖ in 4:25b since reading Sinai as the subject would render the justification in 4:25c “neither necessary nor convincing.”⁶⁰ Given that it does not make sense to speak of Sinai as “enslaved,” the grounding of the correspondence with the present Jerusalem in the city’s being “enslaved with her children” does suggest that the slave woman Hagar constitutes at least part of the subject of συστοιχεῖ. Nevertheless, as argued above, the τό in 4:25a most likely signifies “this Hagar-Sinai mountain” as the subject of that clause and, accordingly, of συστοιχεῖ in 4:25b.⁶¹

We thus have the curious situation in which Paul connects the Sinaitic διαθήκη and the present Jerusalem *through Hagar*. Granted, 4:24 has just asserted the slave-bearing nature of the Sinaitic διαθήκη, so the slavery-based justification in 4:25c could conceivably align the present Jerusalem with Hagar-Sinai “[b]ecause [the present Jerusalem] is based on the Sinai covenant,” as Betz, e.g., claims that it does.⁶² Nothing in the text, however, suggests this causal relationship, nor can the presupposition of this relationship explain why Paul would then explicitly argue for a less obvious connection through Hagar. In fact, it is exactly this kind of causal association that the agitators’ position would have presumed and that Paul’s argument seems designed to avoid. This latter observation, I suggest, then provides the key to understanding the function of 4:25a.

The preceding paragraphs have identified three elements for which explanations of Paul’s argument must account: 1) the introduction of Mount Sinai

59 Attempting to read Paul’s reference to the present Jerusalem positively, Gaston, *Paul*, 91, proposes that συστοιχεῖ here means “is in the *opposite* column from” (emphasis added), a reading that even he rightly doubts is “philologically correct.” Wagner, “Les enfants,” 292, in contrast, suggests that Paul composes the verb συστοιχέω from σύν and στοιχέω so that it has the meaning “walk with.” (For στοιχέω in the sense “walk, live by,” see Gal 5:25, 6:16; Rom 4:12; Phil 3:16.) Galatians 4:25 then asserts that the pagan Hagar “walks with” the present Jerusalem in that both turn to Sinai for salvation, Hagar in her flight through the desert, Judaism through its reliance on the law. As in the earlier references to the στοιχεῖα (4:1–11), 4:25 thus equates Jewish legalism and pagan religions. While Wagner presents a credible lexical analysis of συστοιχέω, his explanation of the connection between Hagar and Jerusalem differs from the one Paul explicitly provides: 4:25c grounds the connection in their shared slavery, not in their both turning to Sinai. This interpretation also fits awkwardly with Paul’s identification of Hagar as the Sinaitic διαθήκη.

60 Cosgrove, “Law,” 229.

61 See p. 263.

62 Betz, *Galatians*, 246. So, too, Broer, “Vertreibe,” 186, who suggests that Paul does not specify this (necessary) connection because it would disrupt (stören) his allegory.

and its Arabian location, 2) the geographical contrast of Arabia with Jerusalem, and 3) the defense of the present Jerusalem's alignment with "this Hagar-Sinai mountain." All of these elements point to the conclusion that Paul wants to create some distance between two entities that everyone involved in the discussion would otherwise closely associate, namely, the law and Jerusalem. Hence, he complicates that normally straightforward relationship.⁶³ Instead of referring to the διαθήκη as ὁ νόμος or the Mosaic διαθήκη, he identifies it by the mountain where it was given, thereby enabling him to associate it with Arabia in contrast to Jerusalem. Similarly, rather than allowing his readers simply to assume the usual connection between the διαθήκη and Jerusalem, he explicitly justifies the association by linking the two entities through Hagar.

Why would Paul introduce this distance between the διαθήκη and Jerusalem while simultaneously arguing for some sort of connection between the two? Interpretations in which 4:24–25 simply establishes a "Hagar" column that stands in opposition to a "Sarah" column elucidated in 4:26–27—interpretations already troubled by the dearth of explicit corresponding elements on the Sarah side—have difficulty explaining such distance.⁶⁴ After all, if Paul's argument involved nothing more than the assigning of an enslaved present Jerusalem to the Hagar-Sinai side of the ledger, then a closer tie between the present Jerusalem and Sinai could only strengthen his case. Betz's proposed logic would have served Paul better, even if left implicit.

I therefore suggest that the free Jerusalem above holds the answer: Paul's argument does not seek to link the Sinaitic διαθήκη with the present Jerusalem so much as it seeks to differentiate it from the Jerusalem above. In other words, in an atmosphere that naturally assumes the correlation of Sinai and Jerusalem, Paul's argument serves to *limit* the Sinaitic linkage to the *present* Jerusalem; he distances Sinai from Jerusalem so that he can exclude the διαθήκη from the Jerusalem above. Read in this way, the γάρ clause that begins in 4:25 extends—contra the standard punctuating of the passage—through 4:26: "and this Hagar-Sinai mountain . . . aligns with the present Jerusalem, for [the present Jerusalem] is enslaved with her children whereas⁶⁵ the Jerusalem above is free" (τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος . . . συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. [sic] ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν).

The argument in 4:24–26 thus proceeds as follows. Paul begins by identifying the Sinaitic διαθήκη with Hagar based on its inability to liberate its

63 Similarly, Perriman, "Rhetorical Strategy," 38–39.

64 For further analysis of this two-column approach to Gal 4:21–5:1 and its problems, see Chapter 8.

65 For a similarly functioning δέ, see Gal 4:23.

“children” from the enslaving στοιχεῖα (4:24). Galatians 4:25a then disrupts the normally assumed connection between the διαθήκη and Jerusalem by highlighting Sinai’s Arabian location, thereby enabling Paul to establish his own link between the two in 4:25b–c based on Hagar and the concept of slavery.⁶⁶ This way of linking the διαθήκη to Jerusalem, however, effectively restricts its influence to the present Jerusalem since the Jerusalem above is free (4:26). The law thus has no relevance for citizens of the Jerusalem above. (As I will argue below, Gal 4:27 then proves the Jerusalem above to be “our” mother.⁶⁷)

Two further points deserve mention. First, as the asserted nature of Paul’s claims about the Jerusalems attest, the argument presupposes the complementary natures of the two cities. Contrary to the scholarly consensus, then, the Jewish law seems unlikely to be the force enslaving the present Jerusalem: Paul could not assert that the Jerusalem above was free from the law without begging the question. What does enslave the present city? Although a few scholars suggest that Paul has Jerusalem’s subjugation to the Romans in view,⁶⁸ A. T. Hanson rightly notes that the similar standing of the apparently “free” Galatian believers (cf. 5:1) with respect to Rome makes this reading unlikely.⁶⁹ Moreover, this interpretation would require the adjective “present” (νῦν) to locate this enslavement in the historical plane, contrasting Jerusalem’s current

66 Martyn, *Galatians*, 438–39, similarly argues that 4:24–25 connects the present Jerusalem to the Sinaitic διαθήκη “via Hagar.” The similarity with my proposed reading, however, ends there. For Martyn, 4:25c represents “the *conclusion* that is to be drawn from the two preceding clauses” (emphasis added), a reading that treats the typically causal γάρ as inferential instead. Paul would then be using Hagar’s connection with both the Sinaitic διαθήκη and the present Jerusalem to establish the enslaved condition of the latter. This suggestion makes little sense. In the first place, treating 4:25 as a conclusion would mean that Paul offers no support for his surely controversial claim that Hagar aligns with the present Jerusalem. Second, even granting this alignment, the connection of Hagar-Sinai with the present Jerusalem would not imply the latter’s enslavement. If anything, it would suggest that the present Jerusalem also gives birth into slavery, but Paul does not draw this “conclusion” in 4:25c. The problem is that a mutual alignment of Sinai and Jerusalem with Hagar can at most establish common ground; it cannot dictate the precise relationship of entities thus aligned. To reach 4:25c as a conclusion, one must therefore presume the grounding of the present Jerusalem in the enslaving Sinaitic διαθήκη, but presuming this relationship renders Hagar irrelevant to the argument.

67 See pp. 274–86.

68 So Standhartinger, “Zur Freiheit,” 297. Meyer, “Galatians,” 206, lists Pelagius, Ewald, and Castalio as subscribing to this view. Hays, “Galatians,” 303, sees Israel’s subjection to Rome as a possible secondary meaning.

69 Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Studies in Paul’s Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1974), 96.

subjugation with its presumably free past and/or future. Paul, however, explicitly contrasts the city not with its past or future incarnations but with “the Jerusalem above.” This shift from a temporal descriptor to a spatial one suggests that “present” characterizes the city more broadly as belonging to the current earthly age.

Combined with the distancing of Sinai from Jerusalem, the presumption of the complementary natures accordingly suggests that the στοιχεῖα enslave the present Jerusalem.⁷⁰ That Paul might expect his audience to accept such a contrast of the human condition in this earthly age with the human condition in the heavenly age to come in terms of “enslaved” and “free” without further defense seems reasonable, especially after the argument in 4:1–11. This suggestion also fits well with the contrast of an earthly “present” Jerusalem formed by Abraham’s (merely) human descendants and a heavenly Jerusalem “above” formed by those Abrahamic descendants who are also children of God.

Second, I should note that merely associating the Sinaitic διαθήκη with the enslaved present Jerusalem would not preclude the διαθήκη’s also functioning in the Jerusalem above. Indeed, the agitators would likely argue for a continuity between the two Jerusalems that could well include the law. In other words, the agitators could simply argue that Paul’s “Hagar” will one day become “Sarah,” with the Sinaitic διαθήκη continuing to preside over both. In that day—so the agitators could argue—the Sinaitic διαθήκη will no longer give birth to slaves. For Paul’s argument to work, then, he must find a way of sharply distinguishing the two Jerusalems that also clearly limits the Sinaitic διαθήκη to the present Jerusalem.

In the next section, I will argue that the citation of Isa 54:1 achieves this effect by proving the Jerusalem above to be “our mother” only because of “our” participation in the Abrahamic διαθήκη. Here I simply observe that, since the argument produces conclusive implications for the Sinaitic διαθήκη only if the διαθήκη gives birth into the same enslavement that troubles the present Jerusalem—i.e., the same enslavement that the Jerusalem above ends—this analysis again confirms the suggestion that the στοιχεῖα and not the law enslave the διαθήκη’s children. This enslavement to the στοιχεῖα then emphasizes the Jews’ human descent from Abraham and accordingly favors a testamentary understanding of the Sinaitic διαθήκη.

70 So, too, Légasse, *Galates*, 359; Dunn, *Galatians*, 252–54; Lührmann, *Galatians*, 90–91, although they all consider the law to be one of these enslaving στοιχεῖα. Le Cornu and Shulam, *Galatians*, 308, suggest that “flesh” enslaves the city, but in this allegory “flesh” describes a means of birth, not an enslaving force.

The Abrahamic διαθήκη: An Adoptive Testament Enabling Entrance into the Free Jerusalem Above

The truly decisive evidence for a testamentary reading of the διαθήκη in Gal 4:24–27 comes from the ability of the adoptive Abrahamic testament to make sense of the Isaianic citation in 4:24. In many ways, Paul’s citation of Isa 54:1 appears to be one of his more straightforward scriptural appeals. The wording matches the wording in known LXX manuscripts and accurately reflects the sense of the MT. The citation also seems contextually appropriate: following the discussion of “the Jerusalem above” in 4:26, the introductory γάρ in Gal 4:27 suggests that Paul’s use respects the verse’s original Isaianic function as an address to a restored Jerusalem (cf. Isa 52:2, 9; 54:11–12). Nevertheless, scholars disagree on exactly how Paul intends the citation to function within his larger argument. We can group the main proposals into three, nonexclusive categories, each of which emphasizes a different aspect of the citation. None of the three presents a particularly satisfying reading.

A first type of proposal sees the citation as connecting the Jerusalem above with Sarah and, thus, the Abrahamic context. These interpretations accordingly emphasize the opening description of Jerusalem as “a barren one who does not bear” (στείρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα), language that Genesis applies to Sarah (cf. ἦν Σαρα στείρα καὶ οὐκ ἔτεκνοποιεῖ, Gen 11:30; Σαρα . . . οὐκ ἔτικτεν, Gen 16:1) before she gives birth to Isaac and, through him, the entire nation of Israel. The linking term στείρα thus enables Isa 54:1 to speak of Sarah by *gezerah shawah*. Proponents of this view can also point to the portrayal of Sarah as the mother of those who seek righteousness and the Lord in Isa 51:1–2—the only OT reference to her outside of Genesis—for evidence that Paul’s application of Isa 54:1 simply follows Isaiah’s lead.

Scholars offer different explanations for the function of this purported connection with Sarah.⁷¹ Reading ἐλευθέρᾳ in the main clause of 4:26 as a *double entendre* alluding to the Abrahamic “free woman” (ἡ ἐλευθέρᾳ; cf. Gal 4:22, 23, 30, 31)—“But the Jerusalem above is (the) free(woman)” —Steven Di Mattei suggests that 4:27 confirms the allegorical identification of Sarah with the Jerusalem above.⁷² For Di Mattei and Cosgrove, this association of Sarah with

71 Bligh, *Galatians*, 404, proposes that Paul introduces Isa 54:1 “to show that he is not the first to treat Sarah and Agar allegorically.” He then further suggests that the citation also proves both halves of 4:26, although not in ways related to the Sarah allusions.

72 Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 115.

Jerusalem's eschatological fruitfulness testifies to the barrenness of the law.⁷³ For other scholars, the identification of "our mother" with the Jerusalem above simply proves that Sarah is also the mother of the church.⁷⁴ Alternatively, if, possibly based on God's promise that Sarah would be a mother of nations (Gen 17:16), Paul assumes Sarah's motherhood of the church (cf. "you are children of promise according to Isaac," 4:28), then the Sarah-Jerusalem connection in 4:27 could establish the claim in 4:26b that the Jerusalem above is "our mother."⁷⁵

73 Cosgrove, "Law," 230 n. 41; Di Mattei, "Allegory," 115. For Cosgrove, Paul uses the Sarah-Jerusalem connection to read the eschatological Jerusalem's barrenness back into the Genesis account, such that Sarah herself has no children until the eschatological seed—i.e., Christ (Gal 3:16)—arrives. The citation thus shows that "*the law has given Sarah no children*" (231, emphasis original). Di Mattei corrects Cosgrove's formulation by noting that the allegorical nature of Paul's association does not allow a direct connection to the historical Sarah. Rather, Paul shows that "*a Sarah . . . has remained barren until Christ*" (emphasis added), i.e., he shows that "Torah allegorically prophesies the same eschatological events proclaimed by Isaiah" (118). Cf. Wagner, "Les enfants," 293 n. 11: "une autre Sara, la Sara « eschatologique »." Herein lies a problem, however. Whereas Cosgrove's formulation wrongly historicizes Sarah, Di Mattei's formulation wrongly allegorizes the promised seed. That is to say, while 4:21–5:1 does portray Sarah allegorically, 3:16 portrays Christ as the actual seed promised to Abraham and, accordingly, to Sarah. This line of analysis therefore requires that we mix the allegorical referent with the historical referent, a practice that Di Mattei elsewhere rightly criticizes (113).

74 Tolmie, *Persuading*, 173; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 215; Betz, *Galatians*, 249. Cf. Perriman, "Rhetorical Strategy," 40, who suggests that the citation "mediates rhetorically, if not logically" between the motherhood of Jerusalem in 4:26 and the motherhood of Sarah in 4:28. Understanding ἡ τις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν to modify ἐλευθέρα rather than ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ, a few scholars suggest that 4:27 proves Sarah's motherhood without presuming that the Jerusalem above is "our mother." E.g., Becker, "Galater," 73, argues that the citation proves her motherhood as follows: since, from the prophet's perspective, the barren woman's—i.e., Sarah's—abundance of children still lies in the future, these children cannot refer to Sarah's physical descendants—i.e., earthly Israel—and must therefore designate the church which, as an eschatological entity, corresponds to the eschatological viewpoint of the prophet. Cf. Vouga, *Galater*, 118, who states only that, in accordance with 3:6–9, 4:27 applies the Isaianic promise for children to those who believe. According to Debanné, "Enthymemes," 17, Frederik Wisse suggests that Paul employs the following syllogism: A. "All children of the promise have Sarah as their mother" (4:27); B. "We are children of the promise" (4:28); therefore, C. "Sarah is our mother" (4:26b). Troubling this syllogism, Gal 4:27 nowhere mentions a promise, nor does 4:28 claim that "we" are children of the promise.

75 E.g., Dunn, *Galatians*, 255; Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Quotation of Isaiah 54.1 in Galatians 4.27," *NTS* 50 (2004): 370–89, 379.

Regardless of the perceived application, the citation in 4:27 actually does a rather poor job of associating the Jerusalem above directly with Sarah. Sarah, for instance, does ultimately experience both the birth of a child and the accompanying labor pains, i.e., the two experiences that the Isaianic passage expressly denies to its addressee. The passage would therefore correspond to Sarah only before the birth of Isaac, yet the present tense of the participles in Isaiah—"you who do not bear" (ἡ οὐ τίκτουςα), "you who do not suffer labor pains" (ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα)—suggests a continuing state. Furthermore, as Karen Jobes notes, the argument in 4:21–5:1 presumes the motherhood of both Sarah and Hagar; since Sarah functions here as the mother of Isaac, an implicit appeal to her barrenness would be somewhat "confusing."⁷⁶ The Isaianic text also reports that the children of this "desolate one" (τῆς ἐρήμου) will outnumber the children of "the one having a husband" (τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα), a characterization that would seem to create a better correspondence with Hagar than with Sarah, the wife of Abraham who ultimately expels the unmarried Hagar into "the wilderness" (τὴν ἔρημον, Gen 21:14).⁷⁷

Isaiah 54:1 therefore cannot connect the Jerusalem above directly to Sarah without tremendous difficulties. Given Paul's straightforward argumentation throughout this letter and his desire to persuade his Galatian audience, it seems unlikely that he would require his readers to overcome these obstacles in his cited text on the basis of an uncited reference to Sarah in Isa 51:2 or other unmentioned clues from the Isaianic context.⁷⁸ Finally, even if the Galatians

76 Karen H. Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4:21–31," *WTJ* 55 (1993): 299–320, 302. Cf. Stanley, *Arguing*, 135 n. 50, who notes that Paul's argument itself provides no indication that Sarah was ever barren.

77 Standhartinger, "Zur Freiheit," 297–98, therefore suggests that, in accordance with Gal 3:28, the citation blurs (verwischen) the distinction between Sarah the "barren" free woman and Hagar the "desolate" slave, thereby continuing a trend in 4:26–27 that Standhartinger also detects in the dearth of explicit contrasts with 4:24–25 (i.e., no mention of Sarah or another διαθήκη) and in the inexact nature of the one contrast that does appear (*present* Jerusalem versus Jerusalem *above*). While I agree that Paul's argument does not seek to create two oppositional columns, the suggestion that 4:27 implicitly invokes the adoptive Abrahamic διαθήκη accounts for the various phenomena Standhartinger notes better than a desire to blend Hagar and Sarah.

78 Di Mattei, "Allegory," 114–15, grounds the connection in the Palestinian triennial reading cycle in which Isa 54:1 serves as the *haftarah* for Gen 16:1. Cf. Mary C. Callaway, "The Mistress and the Maid: Midrashic Traditions behind Galatians 4:21–31," *Radical Religion* 2 (1975): 94–101, 97. Barrett, "Allegory," 164 n. 29, similarly notes that Isa 54:1 forms part of the *haftarah* for Gen 6:9–11:32 (cf. 11:30) in the Babylonian annual reading cycle. Even granting the existence of these particular reading cycles in the first century CE—an existence for which we have, as Di Mattei notes, no explicit evidence (114 n. 44)—we have no external

did detect a connection to Sarah, the agitators could still turn that connection to their advantage simply by asserting the traditional understanding of Sarah.⁷⁹

In light of these problems, a second type of proposal suggests that the Isaianic passage serves primarily to relate the Jerusalem above, not to Sarah and the Abrahamic context, but to the Galatian context. These interpretations accordingly understand the citation to support the claim in 4:26b that the Jerusalem above is “our mother.” For Guy Wagner, the Isaianic implication that Jerusalem’s newfound fertility in Isa 54:1 stems from the work of the suffering servant (i.e., Christ) described in the immediately preceding passage (Isa 52:13–53:12) suffices to establish Paul’s claim.⁸⁰ Neither Paul nor the citation actually makes this connection explicit, however.

Most modern proponents of this approach accordingly focus instead on the prophecy of newfound fruitfulness, with the resulting explanations varying in their nuances and in the exegetical problems that they create.⁸¹ F. F. Bruce, for instance, interprets the fecundity strictly in terms of numbers: “Formerly the Gentiles were sterile, producing no fruit for God, but now their response to the gospel has made them more fruitful than the synagogue: the new Jerusalem has more children than ever the old Jerusalem had.”⁸² While such reasoning

indications that the gentile Galatian Christians would have used one of these cycles, let alone be familiar enough with it to recognize the connection. Furthermore, the agitators could rebut such an argument simply by asserting a different reading tradition. Given these difficulties, we should prefer a reading that can account for the connection without having to appeal to an unmentioned *haftarah*-Torah correlation.

79 So Esler, *Galatians*, 213; Stanley, *Arguing*, 131–32.

80 Wagner, “Les enfants,” 293.

81 According to Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 183, “the image of barrenness derives its force from the introduction of the Gentile element into the Christian Church.” Relating the prior period of barrenness to the gentiles’ formerly estranged relationship to God, however, would require an equating of the barren-now-fecund Jerusalem with either the gentiles generally (e.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 222) or the gentile church (e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* [PG 61.662.59–61]). The former creates the untenable identification of the Jerusalem above with the gentile nations. As Lagrange, *Galates*, 129, notes, the latter unjustifiably limits membership in the church to gentiles.

82 Bruce, *Galatians*, 222. Cf. Broer, “Vertreibe,” 188: “der starken Ausbreitung des Christentums.” Interpreting the passage in terms of competing gentile missions, Martyn, *Galatians*, 442–43, supplements the barren/fecund contrast with the contrast in having or not having a husband, which he rather unjustifiably interprets in terms of having an earthly sponsor. As Martyn himself notes, this reading results in a “literally inconsistent” portrayal of the Jerusalem church (443). (The attempt of de Boer, “Quotation,” 382, to avoid this inconsistency by identifying James as the assumed husband has no justification in the text.) Matera, *Galatians*, 176, suggests instead that Paul uses the citation to

might work today, the possibility that Paul would try to ground an argument in the numerical superiority of Christians over Jews—or even law-free Christians over law-observant Christians—within a few decades of Jesus’ death seems unrealistic.⁸³ Mußner therefore argues that the mere assurance of fecundity suffices to prove that the numerous believers gathered around the Redeemer are children of the Jerusalem above, an argument in which Paul omits the crucial middle step identifying Isa 54:1 with the work of a Redeemer.⁸⁴ Conversely, Burton glosses this fruitfulness in terms of greater “glory,”⁸⁵ but the citation does not actually say anything about glory.

For Hays and Jobes, the larger Isaianic context provides the key. Noting that Isaiah elsewhere connects Jerusalem’s newfound fruitfulness with the conversion of gentiles (e.g., Isa 49:6, 51:4–5, 52:10, 54:2–3, 55:5), Hays suggests that Christianity’s embrace of gentiles proves the Jerusalem above to be the (gentile Galatian) Christians’ mother.⁸⁶ Jobes, in contrast, suggests that Isaiah’s

“prove” the numerical superiority of the Jerusalem above, but numerical superiority is not a point of contention in 4:26. It therefore remains unclear how such a proof would fit into Paul’s argument.

- 83 Bligh, *Galatians*, 406, resolves this problem by limiting the scope of Paul’s comments to the gentile-heavy Antioch community, a resolution requiring his untenable suggestion that 4:21–30 represents the climax of Paul’s speech to Peter at Antioch that Gal 2:14 begins recounting (390). In contrast, Witherington, *Grace*, 336, avoids the problem by identifying Paul himself as the barren-turned-fecund woman who gave birth to the Galatians. The citation would then function awkwardly as a self-exhortation by which Paul reminds himself that his converts in Galatia still outnumber the agitators’ converts. Arguing against this interpretation, the designation “our mother” in 4:26 identifies Paul as a son in this context, not as a mother. Furthermore, when Paul does apply mother imagery to himself in 4:19, he speaks of experiencing labor pains (ὠδίνω) whereas the citation explicitly addresses one who does not experience such pains (οὐκ ὠδίνουσα). Finally, the agitators would have no trouble rebutting such an arbitrary identification.
- 84 Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 327–28, followed by Borse, *Galater*, 172–73; Rohde, *Galater*, 202. Cf. Lagrange, *Galates*, 129. Mußner grounds his association of Isa 54:1 with the work of a Redeemer in the connection that R. Levi (ca. 300 CE) makes between Isa 59:20 and Isa 54:1. One could also potentially appeal to the immediately preceding description of a suffering servant in 52:13–53:12 (cf. Wagner, “Les enfants,” 293–94). Nevertheless, even if Jews in Paul’s day commonly drew these connections—not a given by any means—we cannot assume that the gentile Galatians would comprehend such an argument.
- 85 Burton, *Galatians*, 264.
- 86 Hays, “Galatians,” 304. He also notes that the citation connects Jerusalem’s restoration to Sarah. Cf. Gaston, *Paul*, 90. So, too, Kamila Abrahamova Blessing, “The Background of the Barren Woman Motif in Galatians 4:27” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1996), 317–20, who emphasizes the covenantal aspects of this reading.

conjoining of such themes as childbirth, Spirit, resurrection, and rejoicing in, e.g., Isa 26:17–19, help to identify Jesus' resurrection as the miraculous birth promised to the barren one (cf. Isa [LXX] 1:26).⁸⁷ The chief difficulty with these two readings lies in the degree of scriptural familiarity and exegetical sophistication they must presuppose among the gentile Galatians.⁸⁸

Finally, a third type of explanation argues that the citation's distinguishing of two groups grounds the entire allegory. Focusing on the contrast between "the desolate one" and "the one having a husband," Luther, for instance, finds support for an overriding law/gospel dichotomy by interpreting the "husband" allegorically as the law (cf. Rom 7:2).⁸⁹ Alternatively, Joel Willitts looks to the Isaianic context for the significance of these two designations, arguing that they distinguish an unfaithful, prejudgment Jerusalem (i.e., "the one with a husband") and a postjudgment, redeemed Jerusalem (i.e., "the desolate one").⁹⁰ According to Willitts, Paul eschatologizes this basic paradigm such that the former becomes "the present Jerusalem," the latter, "the Jerusalem above." Aligning the two covenants of Gal 4:24 with these two eschatological instantiations of Jerusalem then enables Paul to characterize the Sinaitic covenant as enslaving and the new covenant as freeing, presumably, Willitts suggests, because the eschatological framework provided by Isa 54:1 effectively establishes the covenants' respective positions in salvation history.⁹¹ Robert Brawley similarly emphasizes the broader Isaianic context but finds the citation's significance in its uniting of the two Jerusalems, i.e., in its portrayal of Jerusalem's transition from a state of slavery and captivity to a state of freedom and productivity.

87 Jobs, "Jerusalem," 314. Cf. Harmon, *She Must*, 182–85, who argues that a gospel-centered reading of Isa 51–54 explains not only this passage but the entire Abrahamic argument in Gal 3–4.

88 Both Blessing, "Barren," 325, and Jobs, "Jerusalem," 318, note that the Galatians would be unlikely to perceive the allusions necessary for their respective readings. Blessing concludes that the Galatians would therefore likely read the citation simply as a proof-text, a problematical solution since, in this reading, the relevance of Isa 54:1 would remain obscure without the proposed intertextual connections. Jobs suggests instead that Paul intends the citation to evoke his earlier teachings.

89 Luther, *Galatians*, 297–98. Cf. Bonnard, "Galates," 99. Bligh, *Galatians*, 404, similarly identifies the husband with the law. In his view, Isa 54:1 then proves (among other things) the claim in 4:26a that the Jerusalem above is free (i.e., from law) by identifying it as "desolate." As for how the city produces children while being husbandless, Bligh appeals to the pattern of Jesus' virgin birth (405).

90 Joel Willitts, "Isa 54,1 in Gal 4,24b–27: Reading Genesis in Light of Isaiah," *ZNW* 96 (2005): 188–210, 192–97.

91 *Ibid.*, 204–6.

Viewed in this way, the citation expresses the hope that all who find themselves aligned with Hagar in slavery will ultimately share in Jerusalem's transition to alignment with Sarah and freedom.⁹²

The lack of explicit guidance from Paul as to the identities of the "one having a husband" and the "desolate one" trouble the first two of these interpretations. The agitators could easily dismiss an identification of the husband with the law as arbitrary. As for Willitts's explanation, his own assessment that "with a mere surface reading [this] meaning is difficult to ascertain and not obvious to later[!] readers"⁹³ renders it unlikely to represent Paul's argument. Indeed, it appeals to an unmentioned interpretive tradition in which "the one having a husband" in Isaiah signifies a prejudgment Jerusalem⁹⁴ while identifying the only one in the allegory who has a husband—namely, Sarah—with Isaiah's postjudgment Jerusalem. The identification of "the *present* Jerusalem" with the prejudgment Jerusalem in "the old/former age"⁹⁵ also seems rather unintuitive since the Jerusalem in Paul's day could historically qualify only as Isaiah's desolate (in-judgment) or redeemed (postjudgment) Jerusalem. Brawley's more abstract interpretation similarly relies on an extensive knowledge of Isaiah and faces the difficulty that 4:24–26 sets the various entities in stark opposition rather than identifying them as poles in a progression.

Two additional exegetical issues transcend these different interpretations. First, we must ask on what basis Paul applies the description of an apparently restored earthly Jerusalem in Isa 54:1 to "the Jerusalem above." Most scholars assume that he simply reads the passage in accordance with common Jewish eschatological expectations,⁹⁶ but, as Andrew Lincoln observes, "literary evidence for this concept [of a heavenly Jerusalem] in Jewish expectations is not as widespread as many commentators would have us suppose and is of a quite

92 Brawley, "Contextuality," 114–15.

93 Willitts, "Isa 54.1," 205, referring to his interpretation of 4:26.

94 Although most interpreters of Galatians adopt a similar view, the glossing of the phrase as "inhabited Rome" in the presumably post-70 CE Isaiah Targum provides relatively early evidence that at least some Jews interpreted Isa 54:1 as describing two separate entities rather than one city at different points in time. See Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 105. For discussion of Isa 54:1 as identifying two separate women, see de Boer, "Quotation," 371—who identifies Isaiah's "one having a husband" as Babylon—and Bligh, *Galatians*, 403.

95 Willitts, "Isa 54.1," 204.

96 See, e.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 246, who describes "the Jerusalem above" as a "famous Jewish concept."

late date.”⁹⁷ Lincoln notes, for instance, that the eschatological hopes of the OT and intertestamental literature focus on the glorified renewal of the earthly Jerusalem without mentioning a heavenly counterpart.⁹⁸ In fact, the only pre-Pauline reference to a heavenly Jerusalem in this literature appears in a portion of the so-called Animal Apocalypse (*1 En.* 90:28–36) in which Enoch sees the old “house”—here signifying Jerusalem—dismantled and a completely new “house” brought about to replace it.⁹⁹ With regard to the Qumran scrolls, Adela Collins identifies three main conceptions of a new Jerusalem: 1) the portrayal of the community itself as a new Jerusalem; 2) the idealized norms for a renewed earthly Jerusalem found primarily in the *Temple Scroll*; and 3) the anticipation of God’s eschatological creation of a glorified city and temple.¹⁰⁰ The idea of a preexistent, heavenly Jerusalem that comes to earth in the eschaton accordingly does not appear until the late first / early second century CE Jewish apocalyptic works of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, texts whose eschatological

97 Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18.

98 Ibid., 18–19. Commonly cited passages focusing on the eschatological restoration of Jerusalem include Isa 2; 54:10–14; 60–62; 65:17–25; Ezek 40–48; Zech 12–14; Tob 13:9–17; 4:7; *Jub.* 4:26; *T. Dan* 5:12; *Ps. Sol.* 11:7–8; *1 En.* 90:28–36. Lincoln suggests that the description of a newly created, glorified, and paradisiacal Jerusalem in Isa 65:17–25 comes closest to the later conception of a heavenly Jerusalem and likely served as the “starting point” for such development.

99 Cf. Schlier, *Galater*, 221–24, who discerns a thematic progression from traditions focusing on the rebuilding of the earthly Jerusalem, to traditions developing the cosmic significance of this rebuilt Jerusalem, to traditions in which a heavenly Jerusalem replaces the earthly city (either as fulfillment or, in Christian texts, antithesis), to traditions involving the preexistence of a heavenly Jerusalem. Significantly, *1 En.* 90:28–36 represents the only pre-Pauline text that Schlier can cite in these last two categories. See, too, the review of texts in John J. Collins, *Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period* (International Rennert Guest Lecture Series 1; Jerusalem: Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, 1998).

100 Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Dream of a New Jerusalem at Qumran,” in *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; vol. 3 of Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 231–54. For the community as a new Jerusalem, see, e.g., *Pesher Isaiah*^d [4Q164] 1 1–7. For the divine eschatological creation of a new Jerusalem, see *Temple Scroll* [11Q19] XXIX, 8–10; *Florilegium* [4Q174] 1 1, 1–13; and *New Jerusalem*^a ar [4Q554] 2 11, 14–16; cf. *Jub.* 1:17.

views may or may not reflect traditions that derive from before the Temple's destruction in 70 CE.¹⁰¹

Paul's terminology and his application of the concept further weaken the case for an apocalyptic background. By and large, Jewish apocalyptic texts do not use Paul's language of a "Jerusalem above." With a handful of late exceptions,¹⁰² the closest match to Paul's actual terminology therefore comes from later rabbis who speak of a "Jerusalem that is from above" (ירושלם של מעלה) that serves as the prototype for the earthly city (e.g., *b. Ta'an.* 5a). As Lincoln notes, however, the earliest rabbinic accounts do not assign this heavenly city an eschatological role.¹⁰³ Lincoln also points out the novel way in which Paul conceives of the Jerusalem above. The opposition that Paul establishes between this heavenly Jerusalem and the present Jerusalem has no precedent: when it does appear in Jewish apocalyptic works, the heavenly Jerusalem serves to assure the ultimate salvation of its earthly counterpart. Paul's portrayal even differs from the Qumranic conception of the community as the new Jerusalem since he identifies the Christian community not as the city itself but as its children.¹⁰⁴

The contemporary literary evidence thus hardly establishes "the Jerusalem above" as a widely accepted component of mid-first-century Jewish eschatological thought. Even when the concept—usually not the terminology—does appear in later Jewish thought, it differs considerably from Paul's usage here.¹⁰⁵ Of course, Paul's unexplained reference to the heavenly city could itself constitute the otherwise missing evidence for the concept's early currency.¹⁰⁶ That he makes no effort to defend his position against the predominant first-century

101 See 4 *Ezra* 7:26–27, 8:52, 10:40–54, 13:36 and 2 *Bar.* 4:1–6, 32:2–4. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 66, e.g., specifically correlates Paul's "Jerusalem above" with the descending heavenly Jerusalem of 4 *Ezra* 7:26.

102 Christl M. Maier, "Psalm 87 as a Reappraisal of the Zion Tradition and Its Reception in Galatians 4:26," *CBQ* 69 (2007): 473–86, 485, notes that ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ appears in one manuscript (P) of 2 *En.* 55:2, while ἡ ἄνω πόλις Ἱερουσαλήμ occurs in *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* (i.e., 4 *Baruch*) 5:35. Hippolytus also uses ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ in recounting certain gnostic interpretations (*Haer.* 5:7.39; cf. 6.34.3). (On gnostic similarities to Paul's usage, see Schlier, *Galater*, 224–25.) All of these instances likely date from the second century CE or later.

103 Lincoln, *Paradise*, 19. He observes that the rabbis often link the concept to Isa 49:16 (cf. 2 *Bar.* 4:2).

104 *Ibid.*, 21.

105 Cf. Peter Söllner, *Jerusalem, die hochgebaute Stadt: Eschatologisches und Himmlisches Jerusalem im Frühjudentum und im frühen Christentum* (TANZ 25; Tübingen: Francke, 1998), 169.

106 So, e.g., Lincoln, *Paradise*, 18.

hope for a renewed earthly Jerusalem, however, suggests that his imagery does not actually derive from the apocalyptic framework that interpreters often assume as its background,¹⁰⁷ a background with which the gentile Galatians seem unlikely to have been very familiar anyway. The decision to locate the city described in Isa 54:1 completely outside the historical, earthly plane therefore requires another explanation.¹⁰⁸

Second, with the exception of the proposals that see the citation as primarily distinguishing two groups, these interpretations of the Isaianic citation all suffer from a larger problem. Scholars routinely observe that the second half of Paul's figurative explanation (4:26–27) omits any reference to Sarah or to a second *διαθήκη*. What they often fail to note is that the explanations of Isa 54:1 discussed above render the *διαθήκη* itself largely irrelevant to the perceived logic of the argument in 4:26–27. These interpretations accordingly have difficulty explaining Paul's identification of the two Abrahamic women as *διαθήκαι* in the first place. He presumably introduces the two *διαθήκαι* because they exclusively characterize—and thus differentiate in some fundamental way—the two groups he has in view. If the second *διαθήκη* plays no role in 4:26–27, however, then the argument does not establish the exclusivity of each *διαθήκη*'s “children” but rather presumes it, a presumption the agitators would surely challenge as an artificial and unwarranted division. Furthermore, since these interpretations find no role in the rest of the argument for the Abrahamic (or new) *διαθήκη*, Paul would have introduced this problematical dynamic to no end, unless, that is, we identify his desire to associate the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* with Hagar as his motivation.¹⁰⁹ Such a reading, however, raises the question of why he would have bothered to link *both* women to a *διαθήκη*.

107 For an extensive argument against an eschatological background for “the Jerusalem above,” see Söllner, *Jerusalem*, 162–69.

108 Mark D. Nanos, “What Does ‘Present Jerusalem’ (Gal 4:25) in Paul’s Allegory Have to Do with the Jerusalem of Paul’s Time, or the Concerns of the Galatians?” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Region of the SBL, St. Louis, Mo., 28 March 2004), 9–10. Cited 14 March 2010. Online: <http://www.marknanos.com/Allegory-Web-Temp-5-2-04.pdf>, suggests that the present/above contrast signals different perspectives: the Galatians must not view their situation from the worldly perspective (hence, “present”) that denies their Abrahamic status but instead view it from God’s perspective (hence, “above”). Nanos grounds this reading in Isaiah’s offering of hope from “above” to those Israelites who were exiles in their “present.” Nothing in 4:24–27, however, indicates that Paul describes perspectives rather than distinct entities. This interpretation thus calls for a more nuanced, implicit understanding of the argument’s relationship to the broader Isaianic context than seems likely in a highly polemical letter.

109 See, e.g., Cosgrove, “Law,” 224–25.

The presence of the two Jerusalems makes this last question even more pressing. The “present Jerusalem” / “Jerusalem above” contrast constitutes the only pairing in Paul’s explanation with both members explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, the two claims for which Paul provides an explicit defense—the alignment of the present Jerusalem with Hagar-Sinai (cf. γάρ, 4:25c) and the identification of the Jerusalem above as “our mother” (cf. γάρ, 4:27; see below)—each relate to one of the Jerusalems. Given this emphasis on the two Jerusalems, the respective enslaved and free status that Paul asserts for them would seem to make the cities natural parallels for the enslaved and free mothers of Abraham’s children. Why he instead links the women to διαθήκαι therefore becomes a mystery in these interpretations.

Interpreting the διαθήκαι as testaments rather than covenants resolves all of these difficulties by making the Abrahamic διαθήκη the key to understanding the relevance of Isa 54:1. In this reading, the crucial aspect of Isa 54:1 lies in its juxtaposition of one “who does not bear” and “who does not experience labor pains” with one who nevertheless has abundant children. This oxymoronic juxtaposition admits of only one resolution: the Jerusalem described in Isa 54:1 must receive her children through adoption.¹¹⁰ The citation thus proves, as its “mother” language would lead us to believe, that the Jerusalem above is “our” mother: she is “our” mother by virtue of “our” participation in the adoptive Abrahamic διαθήκη.¹¹¹ Furthermore, by establishing a completely different criterion of citizenship than the acceptance of the Sinaitic διαθήκη that effectively determines Abrahamic descent in the present Jerusalem, this reading renders the Sinaitic διαθήκη irrelevant in the Jerusalem that Isa 54:1 describes. It thus establishes the necessary exclusivity of the Sinaitic and Abrahamic διαθήκαι.

This interpretation also accounts for the disjunction between “the *present* Jerusalem” and “the Jerusalem *above*,” a disjunction that, as previously noted, most interpreters attribute simply to the influence of Jewish apocalyptic thought. “Present Jerusalem” relates Abraham’s physical heirs to the

110 It is perhaps significant for an adoptive reading that Paul consistently gaps γεννάω when referring to the free woman’s acquisition of children (4:23, 29; cf. 4:24, 26). Covenants could also form kinship relationships (see Chapter 4), although covenantal interpretations of 4:21–5:1 typically ignore this aspect. Nevertheless, other factors in 4:21–5:1 suggest a testamentary reading.

111 Technically, adoption implies participation in the Abrahamic διαθήκη only if Paul has Jews in view since gentiles instead receive the Spirit of adoption through the Abrahamic promise. I will return to the consequences of this observation for Paul’s first-person language in Chapter 8.

present age; “Jerusalem above” stresses its citizens’ heavenly sonship.¹¹² More importantly, the juxtaposition of a chronological marker with a directional marker symbolizes the break that Paul seeks to create between the two: the Jerusalems do not represent versions of the same city at different points in time or space—as a contrast of, e.g., present and future Jerusalems would suggest—but distinct entities with distinct citizenries.¹¹³ In other words, the present/above contrast does not imply the eschatological nature of the Jerusalem above so much as it implies its transcendent nature.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, even if the language does resonate with Jewish apocalyptic thought, we need not assume the Galatians’ familiarity with such an outlook in order for the disjunction to make sense in the context of Paul’s argument.

The interpretation of the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an adoptive testament thus enables the implication of adoption in Isa 54:1 to prove that the Jerusalem above is “our” mother.¹¹⁵ As a result, this reading not only renders the citation relevant to Paul’s argument, but it also creates this relevance in a way that accounts for the introduction of the διαθήκαι in the first place. It explains the otherwise awkward “present Jerusalem” / “Jerusalem above” contrast as well. Finally, because this analysis requires understanding the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an adoptive testament, it indicates that the corresponding Sinaitic διαθήκη should similarly be understood in a testamentary sense, a conclusion that confirms the indications discussed above.¹¹⁶ As the initial focus on Abraham’s having two sons suggests, the argument therefore essentially contrasts two means of establishing Abrahamic descent. This observation then leads to an additional indicator of a testamentary reading, a consideration of the typological nature of Paul’s argument.

¹¹² Cf. de Boer, “Quotation,” 379.

¹¹³ So Maier, “Psalm 87,” 485; Söllner, *Jerusalem*, 163, esp. n. 494. Contra Wagner, “Les enfants,” 293, who suggests that Paul does not oppose the divine and human realms as eternally distinct entities but instead views the heavenly Jerusalem as coming to transform the earth through its children. Paul’s argument in 4:24–27 concerns delineation, not transformation.

¹¹⁴ Contra Lincoln, *Paradise*, 21, then, the passage does not emphasize Paul’s realized eschatology.

¹¹⁵ For adoption as a metaphor for the naturalization of citizens, see Demosthenes 46.15: Apollodorus argues that his father should not be allowed to make a διαθήκη since, as a naturalized citizen of Athens, his father had been adopted by the city (ἐπεποίητο ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου) and Solon’s law forbid an adopted person from adopting.

¹¹⁶ See pp. 258–73.

The Typological Nature of a Testamentary Reading in 4:24–27

A further piece of evidence suggesting that this passage uses διαθήκαι in the sense of “testaments” relates to a much debated question: does the claim in 4:24 that “these women are διαθήκαι” establish an allegorical or a typological connection?¹¹⁷ As I hope to show, a covenantal reading of the διαθήκαι produces an “allegorical” interpretation of the women that the agitators could refute simply by denying the arbitrarily asserted connections.¹¹⁸ In contrast, a testamentary reading of the διαθήκαι produces a “typological” interpretation that establishes the dynamics in Abraham’s original family as a precedent for

117 For interpreters who label these connections typological, see Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* (PG 61.662.20–21); Theodoret, *Commentarius*, 354; Bruce, *Galatians*, 217; Leonhard Goppelt, *ΤΥΠΟΣ: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 139–40 (with the exception of 4:25a); Hanson, *Studies*, 161; Oepke, *Galater*, 148; Bligh, *Galatians*, 392–95; Bonnard, “Galates,” 96–97; Lagrange, *Galates*, 123–24; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 180; Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 206–8. For strictly allegorical connections in 4:24–27, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 80–83; Vouga, *Galater*, 115; Witherington, *Grace*, 326–28; Hansen, *Galatians*, 142; Dunn, *Galatians*, 247–48; Matera, *Galatians*, 175; Koch, *Schrift*, 209–11; Betz, *Galatians*, 243; Schlier, *Galater*, 218–19; K. J. Woollcombe, “The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology,” in *Essays on Typology* (eds. G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe; London: SCM, 1957), 39–75, 52–54; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 208–9. On the further distinction of whether Paul’s argument more closely reflects Palestinian/rabbinic or Alexandrian/Hellenistic allegory, see, e.g., Hanson, *Allegory*, 81–83; Curtis D. McClane, “The Hellenistic Background to the Pauline Allegorical Method in Galatians 4:21–31,” *ResQ* 40 (1998): 125–35, 126–31; Édouard Cothenet, “À l’arrière-plan de l’allégorie d’Agar et se Sara (Ga 4,21–31),” in *De la Tora au Messie: Études d’exégèse et d’herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d’enseignement à l’Institut catholique de Paris (octobre 1979)* (Paris: Desclée, 1981), 457–65; Woollcombe, “Biblical Origins,” 50–54. For the explicit suggestion that 4:24–27 involves elements of both allegory and typology, see Daniel Gerber, “Ga 4,21–31 ou l’indéfinissable méthode?,” in *Typologie biblique: De quelques figures vives* (LD; Paris: Cerf, 2002), 165–76, 174–76; Bouwman, “Hagar,” 3144; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 319–20; Luz, “Bund,” 320; Patrick G. Barker, “Allegory and Typology in Galatians 4:21–31,” *SVTQ* 38 (1994): 193–209, 208–9.

118 Contra Jeremy Punt, “Revealing Rereading: Part 2: Paul and the Wives of the Father of Faith in Galatians 4:21–5:1,” *Neot* 40: 101–18, Paul seems unlikely to rely on a “disposition of trust towards the readers . . . that the Galatian churches would accept Paul as a faithful interpreter of Scripture” (103) in an argumentative context where the agitators could counter his reading. Cf. Fowl, “Abraham’s Story,” 79, 90–95, who notes the problem but suggests that the autobiographical material in Gal 1–2 seeks to establish Paul’s credentials as a faithful interpreter.

Paul's understanding of the current state of Abrahamic descent. That the testamentary reading produces a more coherent and compelling argument then favors this understanding of the διαθήκαι.

Given the varied ways in which interpreters understand “allegory” and “typology,” I begin by defining these two terms. The former presents little trouble. Two Greek rhetoricians roughly contemporary to Paul—Tryphon and Heraclitus—respectively define ἀλληγορία as “an enunciation which while signifying one thing literally, brings forth the thought of something else” (*De tropis* 1.1) and as a “trope that says one thing but signifies another” (*Allegoriae* 5.2).¹¹⁹ The first century CE Roman rhetorician Quintilian similarly defines allegory as a trope that “presents one thing by its words and either (1) a different or (2) sometimes even a contrary thing by its sense” (*Institutio oratoria* 8.6.44 [Russell, LCL]). Quintilian's explanation of these two possibilities interprets the first primarily as extended metaphor (8.6.44–53), the second as sarcasm/irony/mockery (8.6.54–59).¹²⁰ As these explanations suggest, ancient authors tended to construe the nonliteral nature of allegory more broadly than modern readers do. Philo, for instance, argues in *Migr.* 131 that Moses speaks allegorically (ἀλληγορεῖν) when commanding the Israelites to “walk after the Lord your God” (Deut 13:4) since the command to “walk” refers to following the Lord's precepts and not to the literal moving of one's legs.

“Typology” proves more difficult to define, largely because the biblical authors never explain the hermeneutical understanding implied by their references to certain OT entities as “types” (τύποι) of NT realities (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6, 11; 1 Pet 3:21; cf. Heb 8:5, 9:24). Given this ambiguity, scholars often define the term in accordance with their own views of proper OT interpretation so that typology becomes the more reasonable alternative—however “more reasonable” is understood—to arbitrary allegory. Fortunately, since Paul does not use the word τύπος or its cognates in Galatians, we need not determine the exact nature of biblical typology but can instead focus on identifying the components that make a figurative argument compelling in the context of a

119 On the Greek evidence, see Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 105–6, who provides the translations above.

120 In Quintilian's terms, the Abrahamic story would constitute a “pure” allegory—contra Witherington, *Grace*, 323, and Brawley, “Contextuality,” 111 n. 45, who instead identify Gal 4:21–5:1 itself(!) as “mixed” allegory—since nothing in the Genesis account suggests that its portrayal of Sarah and Hagar actually refers to two διαθήκαι. Witherington's secondary suggestion that the “counterintuitive” nature of Paul's identifications might qualify the allegory under Quintilian's second category (323 n. 4) seems to misunderstand the nature of the category.

dispute. Two features commonly attributed to typology—namely, the 1) historical and 2) substantial nature of typological connections—combine to produce this effect.

First, as usually defined, typology seeks to make analogical connections *within the framework of history*.¹²¹ In other words, typology differs from (most) nontypological allegories in that it seeks the significance of a historical text in the “resultant system”—to use James Barr’s terminology—of subsequent history, as opposed to the systems of, e.g., Hellenistic philosophy or Christian theology.¹²² This historical framework renders typology less arbitrary than other figurative arguments because typology seeks the extended significance of the biblical narratives within the same system that the narratives themselves presuppose.¹²³ That is to say, typology grounds its connections in the straightforward presentation of the biblical texts as historical narratives. Nonhistorical allegories, in contrast, render this surface presentation irrelevant. While this irrelevance makes such allegories potentially helpful for explaining away ethically or historically dubious narratives in the sacred texts, it also exposes the resulting interpretations to charges of arbitrariness.¹²⁴

121 E.g., Woollcombe, “Biblical Origins,” 40: “Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things *within the historical framework of revelation*, whereas allegorism is the search for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative” (emphasis original). Cf. Hays, “Galatians,” 301 n. 224.

122 James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of Two Testaments* (London: SCM, 1966), 108. Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical ΤΥΠΟΣ Structures* (AUSDDS 2; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1981), 96, notes that modern skepticism about the historical reliability of the OT raises questions as to the necessity of a type’s actual historicity. Since both Paul and his audience accept the historicity of the Abrahamic account in Genesis, I will not distinguish here between history as genre and history as fact. On this point, see Mark Gignilliat, “Paul, Allegory, and the Plain Sense of Scripture: Galatians 4:21–31,” *JTI* 2 (2008): 135–46, 140–41, 143.

123 Cf. Gignilliat, “Paul,” 141: typology “respects the textual coherence of the story.” See, too, the related discussion of “homogeneous and heterogeneous resultant systems” in Barr, *Old and New*, 115–17.

124 Philo illustrates this point well. For him, the biblical narratives reveal philosophical truths. As Irmgard Christiansen, *Die Technik der allegorischen Auslegungswissenschaft bei Philon von Alexandrien* (BGBH 7; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1969), 27, shows, however, he does not propose his philosophical connections arbitrarily but rather grounds them in logic, always providing reasons for the associations he proposes. He can even justify his choice of a philosophical framework based on his belief that Moses, having been shown the true nature of all things by God, expressed this knowledge in the scriptures in such a way that allegorical interpretation would lead those who love and seek God to a similar understanding (ibid., 170–71; see, e.g., Philo, *Opif.* 8). For anyone who does not share this understanding of the biblical text, however, Philo’s imposition of a

Of course, connections proposed within a historical framework can still appear arbitrary. The second key element of typology—an element related to the term's etymology—accordingly emphasizes the substantial nature of the historical connection. Derived from τύπτω (“to strike”), τύπος focuses on the form that a blow imposes and can signify either the forming entity or the formed impression.¹²⁵ As a hermeneutical method, then, typology emphasizes the real and substantial correspondence—whether synonymous (1 Cor 10:6, 11) or inverse (Rom 5:14)—between a type and its antitype within a historical framework. It thus creates a compelling figurative argument by avoiding both the imposition of a foreign interpretive framework and the identification of superficial connections, components that subject nontypological allegories to charges of arbitrariness.

Since Paul would surely have recognized the problems inherent in trying to persuade his audience through a nontypological appeal,¹²⁶ we might expect his comparison to take a more typological form. Interpreters, however, have often argued otherwise, not least because of the opening claim in 4:24a: “these things are ἀλληγορούμενα.” LSJ defines ἀλληγορέω, which occurs only here in the LXX and NT, as “interpret allegorically” or, when used absolutely, “speak figuratively or metaphorically; speak allegorically.”¹²⁷ Many scholars therefore conclude that Paul’s use of ἀλληγορέω intentionally invokes an allegorical—as opposed to typological—argument. This conclusion, however, rests on an unsustainable distinction: since typology involves the “speaking” (ἀγορεύω) of something “other” (ἄλλος) inherent in ἀλληγορία, it must represent a particular kind of allegory.¹²⁸ Accordingly, although Paul admittedly does not identify the

philosophical framework will always make his proposed connections appear somewhat arbitrary, no matter how well justified they might appear within that framework. To refute such an interpretation one would need only to reassert the sufficiency of the text’s surface presentation as a historical narrative.

125 Davidson, *Typology*, 128–32. For the semantic range of τύπος, see *ibid.*, 116–28; Leonhard Goppelt, “τύπος, ἀντίτυπος, τυπικός, ὑποτύψεις,” *TDNT* 8:246–59, 246–47.

126 Appealing to ps.-Demetrius, Betz, *Galatians*, 240, tries to compensate for the apparent weakness of Paul’s argument by suggesting that allegory’s indirect nature makes it more forceful and allows listeners to discover the truth for themselves. Unconvincing identifications, however, would undermine even these potential positives.

127 LSJ, “ἀλληγορέω,” 69. See, too, BDAG, “ἀλληγορέω,” 46: “to use analogy or likeness to express someth., *speak allegorically*” (emphasis original). Cf. Friedrich Büchsel, “ἀλληγορέω,” *TDNT* 1:260–63, 260.

128 See Gignilliat, “Paul,” 140; Barr, *Old and New*, 105–15. Cf. Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 113. Chrysostom therefore wrongly claims that 4:24 “misapplies” ἀλληγορέω to a type (*Hom. Gal.* [PG 61.662.20–21]).

women as “types” (τύποι; cf. 1 Cor 10:6, 11; Rom 5:14), his use of ἀλληγορέω does not eliminate the possibility of a typological argument.

An additional consideration further undermines the suggestion that ἀλληγορέω must signify a nontypological argument. Galatians 4:24a claims that “these things” (ἅτινα) are ἀλληγορούμενα. Especially when contrasted with the specifically feminine αὐταί in 4:24b, the neuter form of ἅτινα suggests that “these things” include both the slave/free contrast of the mothers (4:22) and the immediately preceding flesh/promise contrast of the sons’ births (4:23).¹²⁹ As the “just as then . . . so also now” (ὥσπερ τότε . . . οὕτως καὶ νῦν) construction in 4:29 indicates, however, Paul clearly applies the flesh/promise contrast in a more typological manner: Abraham’s original two sons anticipate—both in the nature of their births and in their persecutory relationship—the two kinds of Abrahamic sons discussed in 4:28–29.¹³⁰ Paul’s use of ἀλληγορέω thus includes typology regardless of our interpretation of the διαθήκαι in 4:24–27. The lexical evidence alone therefore cannot determine the nature of Paul’s argument; we must look to the argument itself.

Deciding whether or not Paul’s allegory consists of historical connections constitutes a first step in this process. In this regard, Di Mattei argues emphatically that 4:24–27 makes rhetorical connections rather than the historical ones required by typology. He grounds this assessment in the view that Paul’s main identifications rest on a wordplay involving the name “Hagar” and the verbal/thematic ties linking Sarah to Isa 54:1,¹³¹ positions whose problems I have already discussed.¹³² He also, however, notes the significance of ἀλληγορούμενα for this determination, a matter that deserves further discussion.

As noted above, the verb ἀλληγορέω itself can mean either “speak allegorically” or “interpret allegorically.” For Di Mattei, the secondary nature and relative rarity of ἀλληγορέω’s “interpret” nuance make it unfathomable that Paul would mean anything other than “these things are spoken allegorically.”¹³³ In particular, he points to the frequent and unvarying use of ἀλληγορέω to mean “speak allegorically” in Heraclitus’ *Allegoriae*—a relatively short work whose

129 So, e.g., Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 110–11; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 208; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 319.

130 See, e.g., Vouga, *Galater*, 115; Hansen, *Galatians*, 142; Alain Gignac, “Lorsque Paul « raconte » Abraham, Agar et l’autre femme: Narrativité et intertextualité en Ga 4,21–5,1,” in *Analyse narrative et Bible: deuxième colloque international du RRENAB*, Louvain-la-Neuve, avril 2004 (BETL 191; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 463–80, 466; Dunn, *Galatians*, 244, 256; Betz, *Galatians*, 239, 243, 248–49, all of whom view 4:24–27 as allegory but 4:28–30/31 as typology. Cf. Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 31–32.

131 Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 113–14.

132 See pp. 262–63 (“Hagar” wordplay) and 274–77 (Sarah / Isa 54 connections).

133 Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 107.

twenty-six instances of ἀλληγορέω constitute approximately a third of the extant instances from before the second century CE—as providing the best guide to the usage of the term in antiquity.¹³⁴ This interpretation then focuses attention on scripture as the medium through which these things are spoken, a textual emphasis that supports Di Mattei's claims of a rhetorically based argument. He even suggests that commentators who instead understand ἀλληγορούμενα as indicating the figurative *interpretation* of scripture “inescapably reveal [their] typological presuppositions . . . [and] hermeneutical prejudices.”¹³⁵ In other words, interpreters who acknowledge the argument's scriptural basis have no reason to forego the nuance of ἀλληγορέω that emphasizes the textual nature of scripture, other than the typological need to posit a historical connection.

While Di Mattei rightly highlights the problematical nature for typology of a textually based argument,¹³⁶ his case for an interpretation of ἀλληγορούμενα that emphasizes this textual nature proves less compelling. I first note that, as definitions of ἀλληγορέω, “speak allegorically” differs from “interpret allegorically” in that the former has the production of the allegorical text/speech in view whereas the latter identifies an allegory in pre-existing material. With regard to textual allegories, then, ἀλληγορέω appears with the sense of “interpreting” whenever the verb's subject is someone other than the text's author or a personification of the text itself.¹³⁷ It accordingly has this sense in

134 Ibid. See Heraclitus, *Allegoriae* T.1; 1.1; 5.5, 10, 12; 6.2; 13.5; 15.2; 22.1; 23.2; 24.2, 5, 8; 29.4; 41.5, 12; 42.1; 43.1; 59.1; 60.1; 61.3; 68.2; 69.12; 70.1, 11, 13. Given that Di Mattei identifies the length of *Allegoriae* [i.e., *Homeric Problems*] as 87 pages (107 n. 21), he mistakenly identifies the frequency of ἀλληγορέω in Heraclitus as “three times per page” (107) when it should be one instance every three pages. His comparison of this frequency with the term's frequency in Philo (“once every 92 pages”) is also somewhat misleading since his page count covers the entire Philonic corpus. More importantly, it remains unclear exactly why we should expect the greater density of instances in Heraclitus' treatise to produce a more “accurate” gauge of the word's usage.

135 Ibid., 107 n. 22.

136 See, too, Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 320, who contends that Paul's use of γέγραπται to introduce his Abrahamic summary in 4:22–23 emphasizes the argument's textual nature and thus argues against a typological interpretation. Bouwman, “Hagar,” 3144, reaches the same conclusion on the grounds that the neuter ἄτινα focuses attention on the women as textual entities rather than as people (cf. Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 320 n. 20), but the neuter form need signify nothing more than that the pronoun encompasses the nature of their sons' births (treated in 4:28–29) as well as the women themselves (treated in 4:24–27).

137 Since a text always “speaks” in the present, it can be viewed as constantly “producing” its content.

fifteen of Philo's twenty-five instances,¹³⁸ hardly a "rather slim" percentage.¹³⁹ Plutarch similarly uses ἀλληγορέω in this way, as, e.g., in *De Iside et Osiride* 363D: "Greeks allegorically interpret [ἀλληγοροῦσι] Kronos as time and Hera as air." Furthermore, this contextual distinction in the meanings of ἀλληγορέω explains why a work such as *Allegoriae* always uses the verb in the the sense "speak allegorically": since Heraclitus expressly writes to defend Homer from the charges that his poems portray the gods with great impiety,¹⁴⁰ he must attribute the poems' proposed allegorical meanings to their original author. "Interpret allegorically" therefore constitutes an amply attested, contextually determined meaning of ἀλληγορέω whose relative infrequency does not invalidate it as a viable option for the verb's meaning in Gal 4:24.¹⁴¹

Of course, Gal 4:24 involves a passive construction that leaves the "allegorizer" unspecified, so the particular contextual distinction identified above provides little guidance as to the verb's correct nuance. Nevertheless, other contextual factors do enable a reasonable assessment. The claim that an author "speaks allegorically," for instance, typically reinterprets the designated text so that the allegorical meaning replaces the literal. Thus, Heraclitus argues that the Homeric descriptions of, e.g., Apollo's capricious and deadly wrath truly portray the natural disaster of plague *and not* the actions of the god (*All.* 6.5). In other words, he seeks to show that the poet does not actually mean what he literally writes. Philo similarly understands the allegorical meaning

138 According to TLG, Di Mattei's twenty-sixth Philonic instance of ἀλληγορέω actually comes from Eusebius' introduction to part of Philo's *Hypothetica* (see *Praep. ev.* 8.5–11).

139 For "rather slim," see Di Mattei, "Allegory," 107. He reaches his conclusion by suggesting that the ten instances where a participial instance of ἀλληγορέω modifies an external reader of the text (e.g., *Somn.* 2.207: ἀλληγοροῦντές φάμεν, "interpreting allegorically, we say") could be read as "speaking allegorically" even though the "meaning clearly expresses that Philo is *interpreting* allegorically" (emphasis original, 107 n. 20). The ten instances are found in *Abr.* 99; *Agr.* 27, 157; *Contempl.* 28; *Leg.* 3.60; *Migr.* 205; *Mut.* 67; *Somn.* 2.31, 207; *Spec.* 1.269. To this list we can add *Decal.* 101; *Leg.* 3.4, 238; *Post.* 51; *Spec.* 2.29, all of which clearly indicate "interpret."

140 The treatise opens with the claim, "It is a weighty and damaging charge that heaven brings against Homer for his disrespect for the divine. If he spoke nothing allegorically [εἰ μὴδὲν ἡλληγόρησεν], he was impious through and through, and sacrilegious fables, loaded with blasphemous folly, run riot through both epics" (1.1). Translation modified from Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* (trans. David Konstan and Donald A. Russell; Writings from the Greco-Roman World 14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 3.

141 On the clear distinction between "interpret allegorically" and "speak allegorically," see Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 152–55. He notes that ancient rhetorical handbooks discuss only speaking allegorically.

to supplant the literal in at least four of the five instances where he identifies Moses as the subject of ἀλληγορέω.¹⁴²

In Paul's case, this kind of reinterpretation would suggest that Genesis actually describes two διαθήκαι *instead of* two women, a possibility rendered untenable by the presumption of the Abrahamic account's historicity throughout Gal 3–4.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Paul provides no indication—such as a καί—that would suggest to his audience that Moses (the presumed author) simultaneously speaks both literally and allegorically here. It therefore seems highly unlikely that Paul intends ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα in the sense, “these things are spoken allegorically [by Moses].”

Accordingly, for Gal 4:24 to employ ἀλληγορέω in the sense of “speak allegorically,” the implied “speaker” would have to be 1) a personification of the biblical text (cf. 3:8, 22; 4:30) that 2) functions independently of its original (human) author.¹⁴⁴ The first criterion would make “speak” the appropriate nuance; the second would allow the literal sense of the text to stand alongside the allegorical. The “speaking” of “scripture” would thus apply rather than reinterpret the literal meaning of the Genesis account. Although this explanation nicely fits the logical requirements of Paul's argument, it—as well as any other interpretation emphasizing the scriptural text—nevertheless has a fundamental problem: the introductory γέγραπται in 4:22 notwithstanding, Paul's scriptures do not actually “speak” the crucial contrasts that he lays out in 4:22–23.¹⁴⁵

142 Leg. 2.5, 10 both pertain to the creating of a helpmate for Adam, an episode that, as part of the primeval history, Philo sees as nonhistorical (cf. *Opif.* 154, 157). *Somn.* 1.67 and *Migr.* 131 invoke allegorical interpretations to explain difficulties in the literal text. Even *Ebr.* 99, the one possible exception, regards Exod 32:17–19 as thoroughly allegorical; the potential discrepancy arises only in light of the apparently historical treatment of the larger Golden Calf episode in *Mos.* 2.161–66. Cf. Demetrius, *Eloc.* 151, 285; Strabo, *Geographica* 1.2.7; Josephus, *A. J.* 1.24.

143 Contra, e.g., Esler, *Galatians*, 212–13, who suggests that Paul identifies the allegorical interpretation as the “real meaning” of the Sarah-Hagar accounts. Cf. Sellin, “Hagar,” 67: “allegorisch geredet’ . . . im (rhetorischen) Sinne der Verschlüsselung bei der Textproduktion.” Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 156, concludes that ἀλληγορούμενα means “is spoken allegorically” largely because Paul does not specify an interpreter—I will address this objection in the main text—but remains perplexed as to how Paul would envision the text to have been spoken allegorically. Anderson ultimately concludes that 4:21–5:1 engages in an emotional, sarcastic reading of the Genesis account.

144 So, e.g., Burton, *Galatians*, 253. Cf. Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 109.

145 Cf. Hays, *Echoes*, 113; Esler, *Galatians*, 211; Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Allegories of Hagar: Reading Galatians 4.21–31 with Postmodern Feminist Eyes,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (eds. Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon; Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 228–50, 232; Gerber, “Ga 4.21–31,” 169–70,

The OT nowhere describes Sarah, e.g., as “the free woman” (ἡ ἐλευθέρα, 4:22–23), the designation that enables her connection to the free Jerusalem above in 4:26–27. The scriptures similarly never characterize Ishmael as the son “born according to flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται, 4:23) or Isaac as the son born “through a promise” (δι’ ἐπαγγελίας, 4:23), let alone as the one born “according to Spirit” (κατὰ πνεῦμα, 4:29). Ishmael’s “persecution” (ἐδίωκεν) of Isaac that Paul parallels with the present situation in 4:30 represents yet another gloss. Even the wording of the textual citations in 4:27 and 4:30 has at most only a secondary importance: these citations do not make their points through word plays or textual connections such as *gezerah shawah* but through the events they describe (a barren woman who nevertheless receives many children, Isa 54:1) and the principles they establish (Abrahamic children by the slave woman do not inherit, Gen 21:10). The correlations between past and present that Paul draws in 4:21–31 therefore depend not on the specific wording of scripture but on the underlying situation those scriptural words portray. That is to say, Paul applies ἀλληγορούμενα to the history recorded in scripture rather than to the scriptural text that records that history.¹⁴⁶

Since ἀλληγορούμενα therefore seems unlikely to indicate that these things “are being spoken allegorically” by scripture, it must indicate that they “are being interpreted allegorically.”¹⁴⁷ Who, then, does the interpreting?¹⁴⁸ Obviously, Paul proposes the interpretation. The passive construction, however, deemphasizes his role, thereby implying—modern notions of the social construction of reality notwithstanding—that he does not create the proposed connections so much as he highlights a pattern intrinsic to the general unfolding of current events. In other words, the Galatians find themselves in the midst of circumstances that reveal a figurative significance to Abraham’s two sons and their mothers. The argument thus ultimately does not appeal to Paul’s authority as an interpreter of scripture and history, an argumentative ground that the agitators could refute simply by denying that the passage

174, who all emphasize that Paul’s summary in 4:22–23 already involves a particular interpretation of the biblical account.

146 Cf. Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 34: “the ‘allegory’ . . . belongs not so much to the original narrative as to [Paul’s] restatement of it.” Perriman, however, suggests that Paul’s changes emphasize the account’s purported covenantal significance by “[shifting] away from the historical towards the abstract and supratemporal.”

147 So, e.g., Longenecker, *Galatians*, 208–10.

148 Longenecker proposes the Judaizers, Paul, or both as the implied allegorical interpreters (ibid., 210). The Judaizers, however, would have no need to allegorize the passage since the straightforward reading of Genesis would seem to support their case. For the problems with Paul as the implied interpreter, see the main text.

has an allegorical significance. Instead, it appeals to the assumedly self-evident nature of the connections Paul proposes. This suggestion fits well both with the aspectual sense of the participle's present tense and with the "just as then . . . so also now" (ὥσπερ τότε . . . οὕτως καὶ νῦν) dynamic explicitly introduced in 4:29.¹⁴⁹ It also further supports the thoroughly historical nature of Paul's proposed associations.

Paul's argument thus fits the first criterion of typology: it establishes connections within the framework of history. The case for his identification of the women as διαθήκαι in 4:24 as a potentially compelling, typological claim therefore rests on the presumed nature of the διαθήκαι. A covenantal reading offers little to justify their identification with the two women. Paul does draw parallels between the enslaved and free offspring, but these parallels alone hardly constitute the kind of intrinsic, substantial association necessary for a true typological identification. Martyn effectively alleviates the arbitrariness of the connection by presuming that the two διαθήκαι represent covenants made with the two women. As Martyn himself notes, however, while Paul could perhaps associate the Abrahamic διαθήκη with Sarah, God never makes a διαθήκη with Hagar.¹⁵⁰ A covenantal reading of the διαθήκαι in 4:24–27 therefore produces a

149 Burton, *Galatians*, 255–56, helpfully analyzes the verbal form ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα. He notes that it cannot function as a periphrastic participle of customary action ("are wont to be spoken/interpreted allegorically") since "customary" fits neither scripture's speaking nor Paul's particular interpretation. He similarly dismisses "are to be interpreted allegorically" on the grounds that "Greek usage . . . would have required ἀλληγορητέα." The possibility of a periphrastic present indicative ("are spoken allegorically") he rejects because the progressive/customary present tense would contribute little to—and thus be an odd way of expressing—this more "aoristic" meaning. The present participle could also function as an imperfect indicating a time antecedent to the main verb, but he can find no instance of this use where the participle's action already clearly occurs before the main verb, as would have to be the case here. Finally, Burton himself proposes that ἀλληγορούμενα constitutes a general present participle equivalent to a noun ("allegorical utterances"). As he notes, however, the NT otherwise always uses a perfect (τὸ εἰρημένον, Luke 2:24; Acts 2:16, 13:40; Rom 4:18; τὸ γεγραμμένον, Acts 13:29, 24:14; 2 Cor 4:13; Gal 3:10; Rev 1:3) or aorist (τὸ ῥηθέν, Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 22:31; 27:9) substantive participle to designate scriptural sayings. My suggestion above ("are being interpreted allegorically") instead reads ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα as a periphrastic participle of progressive action.

150 Martyn, *Galatians*, 454–55: "[Paul] identifies the second of these covenants as the covenant of Hagar and her son, ignoring the pointed absence in Genesis of a covenant involving Hagar and Ishmael." Cf. Williams, *Galatians*, 125. A typological reading based on analogy makes this "pointed absence" irrelevant. The suggestion of Bouwman, "Hagar," 3148, that the agitators understood the διαθήκη in Gen 15:8 as applying to Ishmael has, to my knowledge, no precedent in Jewish literature. The proposal that Paul's contrasting

largely allegorical reading that the agitators could refute simply by denying the initial identification.

In contrast, a testamentary reading provides the otherwise missing intrinsic connection between the women and the *διαθήκαι*: Paul does not identify the women as *διαθήκαι* simply because their respective “offspring” share similar statuses but because the women and the *διαθήκαι* both establish two lines of Abrahamic descent, one enslaved and one free. The connection grows even stronger if, as Chapter 8 will argue, Gal 4:24–27 seeks to distinguish between non-Christian and Christian Jews, i.e., between two kinds of physical Abrahamic descendants.¹⁵¹ The women thus become apt types, prefiguring and, accordingly, legitimating the twofold division of Abraham’s biological family that Paul identifies in 4:24–27.¹⁵²

Chapter 8 will further analyze how this typological allegory functions within the larger argument. Here I simply conclude by noting that this ability to produce a reasoned typological connection in 4:24–27 further argues for the interpretation of these *διαθήκαι* as “testaments.”

Summary: Testamentary *διαθήκαι* in 4:24–27

This chapter has looked at three factors that argue for a testamentary reading of the *διαθήκαι* in 4:24–27. After introducing the problem, I suggested that Paul portrays the children of the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* as enslaved to the *στοιχεῖα*, a reading that, because it focuses on Abrahamic descent rather than on relationship with God, favors a testamentary understanding of the *διαθήκη*. The chapter then argued that Paul’s citation of Isa 54:1 in 4:27 truly makes sense only as an appeal to the testamentary adoption inherent in the Abrahamic *διαθήκη*. Finally, I made the case that a testamentary reading enables a typological and, thus, more compelling connection between the women and the *διαθήκαι*.

In sum, then, I have argued that 4:24–27 contrasts the nonadoptive Sinaitic testament with the adoptive Abrahamic testament. The passage begins by observing that the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* proves powerless to free Abraham’s physical children from the general human condition of enslavement to the

covenants might have their basis in a contrast of the promissory covenant in Gen 15 and the circumcision covenant in Gen 17 (Gignac, “Paul,” 478) seems even less likely.

151 See pp. 307–13.

152 Theodore of Mopsuetia thus rightly discerns that 4:24–27 juxtaposes past and present circumstances, with the substantial correspondences between the two situations legitimizing the comparison (*Comm. Gal.*, PG 66:908C).

στοιχεῖα. The Abrahamic διαθήκη, in contrast, does free its participants from this enslavement because it adopts them as sons of God. Indeed, whereas the Sinaitic διαθήκη effectively contributes to the dominion of the στοιχεῖα by further subdividing humanity into Jew and gentile, the Abrahamic διαθήκη overcomes these elemental divisions by enabling the union of Jew and gentile—as well as the union of slave and free, male and female—in Christ (3:28).¹⁵³ The Sinaitic διαθήκη accordingly aligns with the slave woman Hagar and the present Jerusalem—a city that suffers the same human enslavement to the στοιχεῖα—while the Abrahamic διαθήκη aligns with the free Sarah and enables entrance into the free Jerusalem above.

This analysis has largely overlooked two critical issues that, although important for our overall understanding of 4:24–27, do not relate directly to the nature of the διαθήκαι. First, as the above summary indicates, the identification of the διαθήκαι with Hagar and Sarah seems largely extraneous; the reason for the matriarchs' introduction therefore requires explanation. Second, I have refrained from addressing the identity of the groups that Paul associates with the two Jerusalems. The two issues are, I suggest, related, and their resolution requires a wider perspective that enables us to see how 4:24–27 integrates into the larger argument of 4:21–5:1. Chapter 8 accordingly addresses both issues in the context of this wider perspective.

¹⁵³ For this reading of 3:28, see Chapter 6.

The Interdependent Union of the Gentile Children of Promise with the Jewish Children of the Free Woman in Gal 4:21–5:1

The Problems with Two-Column Approaches to 4:21–5:1

The opening of Chapter 7 identified two common-yet-problematical assumptions shaping most interpretations of 4:21–5:1: 1) that Paul understands the διαθήκαι in 4:24 as “covenants” and 2) that the passage maps the slave/free and flesh/promise antinomies onto the same opposing columns, thereby dividing Abrahamic descendants into two groups. The remainder of Chapter 7 challenged the first assumption, arguing for a testamentary understanding of the διαθήκαι in 4:24. Chapter 8 now addresses the second assumption.

Often taking their cue from the use of συστοιχεῖ in 4:25, scholars normally approach Gal 4:21–5:1 by dividing the assorted elements into two opposing columns.¹ Although some variation occurs, the following table provides a representative sample of the elements usually included:

Hagar	[Sarah]
Enslaved	Free
Sinaitic διαθήκη	[Abrahamic (or new) διαθήκη]
Present Jerusalem	Jerusalem above
[Ishmael]	Isaac
Born according to flesh	[Born] through promise / according to Spirit

On the Hagar side of the comparison, the invocation of traditional Jewish symbols (Sinai, Jerusalem) and fleshly descent clearly resonates with Judaism. Meanwhile, the Spirit language, reference to “our” mother, and intimation of persecution by the fleshly descendants describe Christianity well. Any interpretation of these opposing columns must accordingly begin from their apparent contrast of Jews and Christians.

Scholars typically interpret this contrast in one of four ways. The historically predominant interpretation absolutizes the contrast, identifying the

1 See, e.g., the extensive table in Gignac, “Paul,” 474. Cf. Malan, “Strategy,” 236: “two opposing symbolic universes.”

Hagar column with Jews and the Sarah column with Christians. Several recent interpreters, however, follow J. Louis Martyn in identifying the two columns respectively with law-observant and law-free Christian missions to the gentiles. Representing a minority position, Troy Martin suggests the columns instead differentiate non-Christian and Christian Jews. Finally, a few interpreters broaden the columns' significance, seeing the inherent contrast of Jews and Christians as indicative of larger, worldwide oppositions such as "law and gospel" or "slavery and freedom."

The number of omitted elements in the contrasting pairs troubles these "columned" approaches, as does the likelihood that συστοιχέω signifies simply "stand in alignment with" rather than the more technical "stand in an oppositional column with."² More importantly, as the following analysis will show, exegetical problems prevent any of these four interpretations from offering a

2 According to TLG, συστοιχέω appears only twice outside of Paul before the second century CE: once in Polybius (*Hist.* 10.23.7), where it describes a cavalry unit that maintains its lines while rapidly advancing or retreating, and once in a mathematical treatise by Heron (*Geometrica* 14.23). The nominal (συστοιχία) form appears more frequently and signifies a series/column/line of related elements (LSJ, "συστοιχία," 1735; cf. "σύστοιχος," 1735–36). In particular, scholars often highlight Aristotle's application of συστοιχία to the two opposing columns formed by the Pythagoreans' ten pairs of fundamental principles (odd/even, right/left, male/female, etc.)—τὰς ἀρχὰς δέκα... τὰς κατὰ συστοιχίαν λεγόμενας, *Metaph.* 986a23; cf. its application to one of the opposing columns in *Metaph.* 1004b27, 1066a15, 1093b12, and *Eth. nic.* 1096b6—to suggest that the rare verbal form in Gal 4:25 signifies "align in oppositional columns." See, e.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 438–39; Boyarin, *Radical*, 33; Gaston, *Paul*, 83–85; Lietzmann, *Galater*, 31; Lagrange, *Galates*, 127; Delling, *TDNT*, 7:669. In these Aristotelian instances, however, συστοιχία retains its basic meaning of "column"; only the context indicates that the word refers to part of an opposing pair. Context would accordingly also have to show that Paul intends to construct two oppositional columns for συστοιχεῖ to have this sense in 4:25. Although many scholars do find the context to support this interpretation, the lack of explicit antitheses in 4:24–27 and the general development of the argument suggest that Paul has a different agenda. We should therefore probably understand συστοιχεῖ in 4:25 simply as "stand in alignment with." Cf. Brawley, "Contextuality," 111–12; Standhartinger, "Zur Freiheit," 297–98. Nanos, "Present Jerusalem," 5–7, similarly argues against a technical use of συστοιχέω. His counterproposal that the verb instead "signals [an] intertextual link" between the Abrahamic account in Genesis and Israel's story in Isa 54, however, would likely render the argument unintelligible to the Galatians given that Isa 54 does not even enter the discussion until Gal 4:27. For difficulties with the alternative suggestions of Lipsius ("equal in numerical value"), Gaston ("is in the opposite column from"), and Wagner ("walk with") for the meaning of συστοιχέω, see p. 267 n. 47 (Lipsius) and p. 270 n. 59 (Gaston and Wagner).

truly compelling account. In fact, some of the most significant issues arise from the very assumption that the passage constructs two oppositional columns.

Proposals that understand the contrast as indicative of a larger opposition take two forms. One type expands the concrete application of the contrast so that the Jews become representative examples of all humanity. For example, Luther broadens the text's presumed criticism of the Jewish law to include "all laws, human and divine." The passage thus becomes a contrast of law and gospel, with 4:30 indicting "the Jews, Grecians, Romans, and all others who persecute the Church of Christ," including those who profess Christ yet still rely on works for their justification.³ The chief problem with this approach lies in justifying the expanded application: not only does Paul introduce the passage as an analysis of *Abraham's* two sons, but he also clearly identifies Hagar with the Sinaitic διαθήκη in 4:24. Viewing her allegorical children as anything other than Jews is therefore difficult.

A second form regards the contrasting columns as signifying a more abstract opposition between slavery and freedom that Paul sets before the Galatians as a choice. Viewed in this way, the passage focuses primarily on reorienting the Galatians towards freedom, not on identifying an opposing group.⁴ This interpretation finds support in the joining of Jew and gentile as slaves to the στοιχεῖα in 4:1–11 and in the emphasis on the slave/free contrast in the passage's concluding verses (4:31–5:1). Nevertheless, it has trouble reconciling its need for abstraction with Paul's concretizing of the persecutors in 4:29.⁵

Troy Martin, in contrast, argues that 4:21–5:6 draws a distinction within Judaism. For Martin, Paul's primary problem is that the Galatians are returning to their pagan ways as a result of their aversion to the circumcision requirement in the agitators' gospel (cf. 4:8–11).⁶ Since the Galatians have no interest in coming under law in this scenario, Paul's opening characterization of his addressees in 4:21 as "those who desire to be under law" must accordingly refer to the agitators rather than the Galatians.⁷ The allegory then serves to differentiate two types of circumcised Abrahamic descendants—i.e., non-Christian

3 Luther, *Galatians*, 297, 309.

4 See Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 151; Gignac, "Paul," 479; Brawley, "Contextuality," 115.

5 See pp. 318–19.

6 Martin, "Apostasy," 440–45.

7 Ibid., 450–51. He notes that the identity of the addressees constitutes "the most significant exegetical problem in 4:21–5:6" (450). See, too, Herbert Ulonska, "Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen in den paulinischen Briefen" (Ph.D. diss., Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 1963), 65–70, who similarly identifies 4:21–27 as targeting the agitators.

and Christian Jews—warning the agitators that their own circumcision, like Ishmael’s circumcision, does not suffice to qualify them as Abraham’s chosen offspring.⁸ They must therefore choose to continue aligning themselves with Isaac by not practicing the fleshly distinction of circumcision.

Martin’s intriguing proposal has several points of contact with the interpretation I will suggest, an interpretation that similarly sees much of the passage as distinguishing between non-Christian and Christian Jews. Martin’s analysis, however, stands or falls based on his claim that 4:21 addresses the agitators, a claim he defends based largely on Gal 5:1. Since Martin understands Paul to distinguish sharply between Jewish enslavement to the law and gentile enslavement to false gods (4:8–10), he argues that the exhortation in 5:1 to avoid submitting to the law and thereby coming under a yoke of slavery “again” must address Jewish Christians.⁹ The contention in Chapter 7 that Paul does not portray the law as enslaving but as unable to liberate from the common human slavery to the *στοιχεῖα* undermines both this conclusion and the distinction that lies behind it (cf. 4:3, 8–9).¹⁰ Of course, this observation does not prohibit 5:1 from addressing the agitators, but without a clear shift in subject, the second-person verb *ἐτρέχετε* in 5:7—which Martin rightly understands as addressing the Galatians¹¹—would seem to continue addressing the same group as the preceding verses.¹² The evidence thus suggests that those “desiring to be under law” in 4:21 are the Galatians.

In light of these difficulties with the alternatives, the traditional interpretation of 4:21–5:1 as contrasting Judaism and Christianity outright would seem to have much to commend it.¹³ Martyn, however, critiques this traditional view on two related points. First, the present tense of *γεννώσα* in 4:24 indicates that the “bearing” of the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* cannot refer to the initial formation of

8 Martin, “Apostasy,” 456–57.

9 Ibid., 454–55.

10 Martin also notes that the references to “desiring to be under law” in 4:21 and “practicing the distinction of circumcision” (*περιτέμνησθε* / *περιτεμνομένῳ*) in 5:2–3 identify quintessential characteristics of the agitators (cf., e.g., 6:13) (ibid., 453–56). These characteristics, however, apply exclusively to the agitators only if one accepts Martin’s proposed scenario in which the Galatians are persuaded by the agitators’ position and accordingly reject the gospel.

11 Ibid., 458, esp. n. 102.

12 Ulonska, “Funktion,” 69–71, argues that the *ὅμοις* and vocative *ἀδελφοί* in 4:28 shift the address from the agitators in 4:21–27 back to the Galatians in 4:28. Contextual continuity, however, suggests that the *ὅμοις* in 4:28 designates the same group that Paul addresses in 4:21 as those desiring to be under law.

13 See, e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 301–2, 304, 310–11.

Israel; it must refer to people currently coming under the law. Second, the key descriptions “according to flesh” and “through promise” / “according to Spirit” (4:23, 29) function adverbially rather than adjectivally; they characterize a birthing process, not a static people or religion.¹⁴ Accordingly, neither their respective origins nor the characteristics of their respective members serve to differentiate the two contrasted groups. The passage instead differentiates them based on the way in which their respective διαθήκαι “give birth.”

This last observation makes it difficult to see how the passage could contrast Judaism and Christianity, at least if the διαθήκαι signify covenants. The problem arises in that, viewed covenantally, the Sinaitic διαθήκη determines membership in the Abrahamic διαθήκη, i.e., it determines membership in the people of Israel who, as Abraham’s chosen descendants, share in Abraham’s relationship with God. While Paul could therefore argue that the Sinaitic legislation represents an “unlawful” addition to the Abrahamic διαθήκη—as many interpreters (mistakenly) claim that he does in 3:15–20¹⁵—distinguishing it as a separate, contrasting covenant with a different “birthing process” would seem rather arbitrary and disingenuous.¹⁶ As a result, reading the passage covenantally as a contrast of Jews and Christians truly works only if the two διαθήκαι Paul has in mind are the Sinaitic διαθήκαι (cf. Gal 4:24–25) and an otherwise unmentioned new διαθήκη instituted by Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6).¹⁷ The preoccupation with the Abrahamic διαθήκη in Gal 3–4, however, makes such a conclusion untenable.¹⁸

14 Martyn, “Covenants,” 177–79.

15 See Chapter 5.

16 For the “striking” nature of Paul’s reference to *two* covenants, especially in light of his argument in 3:15–20, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 454–55; Dunn, *Galatians*, 248–49; Witherington, *Grace*, 330. Dunn’s resolution that the two covenants effectively represent “two ways of understanding the one covenant purpose of God” (249) cannot be reconciled with the passage’s consistent portrayal of the διαθήκαι as distinct entities, not perspectives. The suggestion of de Boer, *Galatians*, 298, that Paul distinguishes a promissory covenant in Gen 15:15 / 17:1–8 from the circumcision covenant of Gen 17:9–14 (which Paul subsumes under the later Sinaitic covenant) would leave Paul’s argument easier to refute than comprehend.

17 So, e.g., Brendan Byrne, “Jeruselems Above and Below: A Critique of J. L. Martyn’s Interpretation of the Hagar-Sarah Allegory in Gal 4.21–5.1,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 215–31, 221–23; Willitts, “Isa 54.1,” 200 n. 30; Becker, “Galater,” 71–72; Vouga, *Galater*, 117; Wagner, “Les enfants,” 294; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 211; Betz, *Galatians*, 243; Lietzmann, *Galater*, 30; Luz, “Bund,” 320–21; Meyer, “Galatians,” 206; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 181; Luther, *Galatians*, 291.

18 Scholars who identify the second διαθήκη as Abrahamic include Moo, *Galatians*, 301; de Boer, *Galatians*, 296; Witherington, *Grace*, 332; Matera, *Galatians*, 169; Hays, *Echoes*, 114.

Galatians 4:21–5:1 must therefore contrast the Sinaitic and Abrahamic διαθήκαι, but since—when viewed as covenants—the Sinaitic διαθήκη determines membership in the Abrahamic διαθήκη, the “birthing” processes of these two διαθήκαι cannot be set in absolute contrast with any historical credibility. These conclusions then undermine the suggestion that the Abrahamic covenant signifies Christianity in opposition to the Judaism of the Sinaitic covenant. Resolving this problem requires that we either abandon the traditional covenantal understanding of the διαθήκαι or else argue that Paul refers to a relative application of the covenants that differs from their traditional historical roles. In accordance with Chapter 7, I will ultimately argue for the former option, contending that a testamentary understanding of these διαθήκαι allows the nonadoptive Sinaitic διαθήκη to retain its traditional role delimiting Abraham’s natural descendants while also explaining how Paul can limit the relevance of the adoptive Abrahamic διαθήκη to (Jewish) Christians. Martyn, in contrast, opts for the latter.

Suggesting that the thought of “labor pains” in 4:19 gives rise to—and, thus, highlights the main theme of—the argument in 4:21–5:1,¹⁹ Martyn finds the interpretive key to the passage in Paul’s decision to use γεννάω (4:23, 24, 29) as his verb of begetting/bearing instead of the τίκτω that appears throughout the Genesis account of Abraham.²⁰ He notes that conformity to the LXX’s consistent practice of rendering the Hebrew תָּלַד with γεννάω for instances of male begetting but with τίκτω for instances of female bearing could potentially explain the instances in 4:23 and 4:29 if they assume Abraham as progenitor. The use of γεννώσα to describe the bearing of the Sinaitic διαθήκη “who is Hagar” in 4:24, however, breaks this pattern and therefore demands an explanation.²¹ Increasing the need for an explanation, τίκτω has just appeared in the preceding citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27. According to Martyn, this previous instance shows not only that Paul felt comfortable using τίκτω, but also that he sacrificed an opportunity to establish a linkword connection (*gezerah shawah*) between his Isaiah and Genesis passages.²²

Having thus made his case that Paul effectively places γεννάω “in italics,” Martyn then turns to the significance of this “emphatic substitution.”²³ In this

19 Martyn, “Covenants,” 171.

20 With respect to Abraham and his two sons, τίκτω appears in Gen 16:1, 2, 11, 15, 16; 17:17, 19, 21; 18:13; 19:37, 38; 20:17; 21:2, 3, 7; 24:36; and 25:12. In contrast, γεννάω appears only in Gen 17:20, where it refers to Ishmael’s becoming a father of twelve princes.

21 Martyn, “Covenants,” 174.

22 Ibid., 175.

23 For “in italics,” see *ibid.*, 177. For “emphatic substitution,” see p. 174.

regard, he observes that, except for the references to physical birth in Gal 4:23, 4:29, and Rom 9:11, Paul uses the verb γεννάω “only in speaking of the genesis of Christians and of Christian churches through the power of the gospel entrusted to him by God.”²⁴ Coupling this observation with an awareness that the present tense of γεννώσα indicates an ongoing birthing process, he then concludes that γεννάω functions throughout 4:21–5:1—and in 4:24 in particular—as a technical term for Christian conversion (i.e., Paul’s “missioning verb”), a reading that interprets the passage’s argument as distinguishing between two distinct Christian missions to the gentiles, one law observant, the other law free.²⁵

As appealing as Martyn’s analysis has proven to be in a post-Holocaust environment,²⁶ the evidence simply does not support it. First and foremost, since all the instances of γεννάω in 4:21–5:1 appear in paraphrased summaries of the Abraham story rather than in citations of specific texts, we can hardly speak of a “substitution,” much less an “emphatic” one. Indeed, the only instance of τίκτω in all of Paul’s writings occurs in his citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27. He even uses γεννάω when describing Rebekah’s “bearing” of Esau and Jacob in Rom 9:11. The evidence thus suggests that Paul simply prefers γεννάω when not citing a specific text that uses τίκτω. The purported canceling of a potential *gezerah shawah* with the Isaianic citation proves equally unpersuasive, largely because it presumes that Paul would want to establish such a connection. As Chapter 7 argues, however, the implication of adoption in Isa 54:1 provides the citation’s significance for the argument;²⁷ establishing a link-word connection with Abraham’s story in Genesis on the basis of “giving birth” would only confuse the issue. Paul’s use of γεννάω therefore hardly requires special explanation.

Of course, Paul need not emphasize γεννάω in order to use it in the way Martyn suggests, but, here again, evidence is lacking. Martyn’s analysis would be more compelling, for instance, if he could point to more than *two* instances

24 Martyn, *Galatians*, 451. His analysis regards as non-Pauline the instance in 2 Tim 2:23, where speculations “beget” quarrels.

25 Ibid., 451–57, followed by Susan Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 131–32, esp. n. 18; de Boer, “Quotation,” 381–82; Hays, “Galatians,” 300; Witherington, *Grace*, 331; Williams, *Galatians*, 130–31; Hansen, *Galatians*, 144; Matera, *Galatians*, 176–77; Siker, *Disinheriting*, 45–47. Cf. Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 325, 332, who, emphasizing the occasional nature of Paul’s argumentative context, similarly argues that Paul here targets the agitators and Jewish Christianity rather than Judaism.

26 Tellingly, Martyn explicitly situates his reading in the post-Holocaust conversation between Christians and Jews (“Covenants,” 160–63).

27 See pp. 284–85.

in Paul (1 Cor 4:15; Phlm 1:10) of this supposedly technical use of γεννάω to signify Christian missions. Weakening the case for this technical use even further, Paul does not use γεννάω in Gal 4:19 when describing his own labor over the Galatians, a discrepancy Martyn explains on the grounds that the agitating Teachers' influence has cast doubt on the Galatians' conversion. If the agitators' law-observant influence would lead Paul to "[suppress] his mission-oriented verb" in 4:19,²⁸ however, then on what basis should we expect Paul to recognize the law-observant mission as truly "begetting" Christian churches (cf. "a different gospel," Gal 1:6)? Martyn argues that Paul refers to the "begetting" of the law-observant mission only in the context of distinguishing it from the true "begetting" of the law-free mission,²⁹ but the slender exegetical foundation for the proposed technical use of γεννάω—only two of the six total instances in Paul—cannot bear the weight of all the exceptions. In short, while γεννάω clearly can refer to a specifically Christian mission, no contextual indications suggest this nuance in Gal 4:21–5:1.

Two other issues also trouble both the Judaism/Christianity and the law-observant/law-free missions interpretations. First, both readings assume that Paul contrasts types of Abrahamic sons in order to make a point about more abstract entities, but such interpretations disregard the importance of Abrahamic sonship throughout Gal 3–4. Paul does not claim to contrast religions or even missions, abstractions which focus more on relationship to God than descent from Abraham. Rather, he claims to contrast ways of becoming a son of Abraham, and, thus, types of Abrahamic sons. He provides no indication that he expects his readers to push beyond this explicit concern. Indeed, the very emphasis on begetting that Martyn rightly notes focuses the argument on avenues of Abrahamic descent.

Second, each of these two interpretative models has trouble explaining why Paul develops both the slave/free and the flesh/promise typologies. In the traditional Jew/Christian interpretation, the slave/free contrast signifies a person's stance toward the law while the flesh/promise contrast signifies the nature of a person's Abrahamic "birth." While the two criteria align for law-observant Jews and law-free Christians, they lead to conflicting conclusions for law-observant (i.e., Jewish) Christians. The argument would accordingly leave the status of such Jewish Christians in doubt: do they align with the Jews because of their enslavement to the law or with the Christians because of their new

28 Martyn, "Covenants," 176; Martyn, *Galatians*, 451.

29 Martyn, *Galatians*, 451.

birth through the promise/Spirit?³⁰ Paul could have removed the ambiguity by developing only the most relevant typology, a reality admitted by the many scholars who suggest that skipping from 4:23 to 4:28 clarifies the argument.³¹

Martyn's two-missions interpretation has the opposite problem. By interpreting the flesh component in the flesh/promise typology as signifying the circumcision of gentile Christians, Martyn enables both typologies to signify a person's relationship to the law. While this equivalence in function means that both criteria produce the same result, it also threatens to make the second contrast redundant. Of course, Paul could simply have sought to make his point in multiple ways, but then we would have expected a clear delineation and demarcation of the arguments. The passage instead intermingles the two typologies to the point that R. P. C. Hanson complains, "one is uncertain how far Paul is allegorizing Ishmael and how far Hagar, and whether he is not in fact confusing the two allegories."³² That Martyn can achieve this uniformity in criteria only by assuming that an argument about Abrahamic descent "according to flesh" would relegate the Jews to "somewhere in the background"³³ makes this reading even less likely.

These difficulties arise, I suggest, largely because scholars assume that both typologies in 4:21–31 map onto the same two oppositional columns. As a result, the passage can describe at most two groups, but Paul's argument in Gal 3–4 has consistently distinguished three different groups with a claim to Abrahamic sonship: non-Christian Jews, Christian Jews, and Christian gentiles. The traditional interpretation leaves the status of many Christian Jews unaddressed while Martyn's reading does the same for the non-Christian Jews, odd omissions for an argument focused on establishing true Abrahamic descent.

This chapter accordingly argues that Paul's two typologies contrast two different sets of Abrahamic descendants: the slave/free typology in 4:24–27 distinguishes non-Christian Jews from Christian Jews, while the flesh/promise typology in 4:28 distinguishes Jews from gentile Christians. Paul then merges the typologies in 4:29–30 such that the resulting typology of the free children of promise finds fulfillment only in the union of the Jewish children of the free woman with the gentile children of promise. Finally, Gal 4:30–5:1 exhorts the

30 Betz, *Galatians*, 251, locates the Jewish Christian agitators on the Jewish side; Schlier, *Galater*, 227, locates them on the Christian side.

31 E.g., Callaway, "Mistress," 97; Nanos, "Present Jerusalem," 11; Dunn, *Galatians*, 255 (Paul gets "somewhat sidetracked"); J. C. O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1972), 63 (4:24–27 is a later interpolation).

32 Hanson, *Allegory*, 80.

33 Martyn, "Covenants," 188.

gentile Christians to cling to this union, standing firm with their free Jewish Christian siblings. Differentiating the two typologies thus allows a reading to emerge that leaves the argumentative focus on Abrahamic descent while also accounting for the introduction of both typologies in a way that is neither contradictory nor redundant.

**Sons of the Slave Woman and Sons of the Free Woman in 4:24–27:
Distinguishing Non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews as Sons of
Abraham**

Gal 4:24–27

^{24a}ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα· ^bαὐταὶ γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, ^cμία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ, εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ^dἣτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ. ^{25a}τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ, ^bσυστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, ^cδουλεύει γάρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς. ^{26a}ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, ^bἣτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν· ²⁷γέγραπται γάρ, Εὐφράνθητι, στείρα ἡ οὐ τίκτουςα· ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα· ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μάλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχρούσης τὸν ἄνδρα.

^{24a}*These things are being interpreted allegorically, ^bfor these [women] are two testaments, ^cone indeed from Mt. Sinai bearing children into slavery, ^dwhich is Hagar. ^{25a}And this Hagar-Sinai mountain is in Arabia, ^bbut it aligns with the present Jerusalem, ^cfor [the present Jerusalem] is enslaved with her children ^{26a}whereas the Jerusalem above is free. ^bThis [Jerusalem above] is our mother, ²⁷for it is written, “Rejoice barren one who does not bear! Break forth and shout, you who do not suffer birth pains! Because more are the children of the desolate one than of the one having a husband.”*

The first typology whose membership we must determine consists of the sons of the slave woman and the sons of the free woman in Gal 4:24–27. As noted above, most interpreters throughout history have read this passage as a contrast of Jews and Christians. Many recent scholars, however, expand the Christian side of the contrast to include the citizens of the present Jerusalem so that the passage becomes a contrast of law-observant and law-free Christian missions to the gentiles. I suggest that we should instead expand the Jewish side of the equation to include the citizens of the free Jerusalem above.³⁴

34 So, too, Robinson, “Distinction,” 41: “This exposition [4:21–5:1], especially the references to the two covenants and the two Jerusalems, indicates that Paul is describing Jews and does not include Gentiles.” Cf. Martin, “Apostasy,” 450–56; Troy W. Martin, “The Brother Body:

Chapter 7 has already detailed my understanding of the argument in 4:24–27, while the beginning of Chapter 8 has identified the larger problems with the usual ways of identifying the sons of the slave woman and the free woman. With the goal of supplementing rather than repeating these earlier discussions, I propose to make my case here by considering an issue that I noted but refrained from addressing earlier—namely, the purpose for which Paul introduces Hagar and Sarah into the argument in the first place—and by focusing mainly on the positive evidence for my proposal.

Why does Paul introduce Hagar and Sarah? Significantly, the allegory does *not* serve to identify their “true” children, an argument that would have practically no chance of persuading the Galatians. As Di Mattei perceptively notes,

An expression such as ‘the Jews are the sons of Hagar’ misreads the allegory by mixing literal and allegorical contexts. ‘Hagar’ is drawn from the literal narrative, whereas ‘Sinai’ is its allegorical sense; ‘the Jews’ are likewise part of this allegorical narrative, and thus properly ‘the sons of the Sinai covenant’. Mixing literal and allegorical signifieds fabricates something that is not there in Paul’s own thought. . . . Paul’s exegesis does not reverse the Genesis narrative, nor does it claim that the Jews are the sons of Hagar and the Gentiles the ‘true’ or ‘spiritual’ sons of Sarah.³⁵

Addressing and Describing the Galatians and the Agitators as Ἀδελφοί,” *BR* 47 (2002): 5–18, 16–18; Ulonska, “Funktion,” 65–70, who see 4:21–27 as addressing the agitators. Nanos, *Irony*, 156, suggests that the passage instead addresses the Galatians in the context of an intra-Jewish debate over the requirements for becoming children of Abraham. He accordingly identifies the heavenly Jerusalem with “the authorities of the Christ-believing coalition” and the present Jerusalem with “a non-Christ-believing interest group” contending that gentiles must undergo proselyte conversion. The “slaves” in the allegory then represent gentile proselytes while the “free” represent the Jews and gentiles in Christ (Nanos, “Present Jerusalem,” 4). This proposal has at least three significant problems. First, “slavery” ceases to signify an actual enslavement, becoming instead simply an indication that the gentiles would have entered the family in the same way as Abraham’s slaves—and Ishmael—did (i.e., circumcision past eight days old). Second, the passage provides no indication that we should restrict Hagar’s connection to the Sinaitic διαθήκη to “a specific element of the Mosaic covenant . . . namely, proselyte conversion for foreigners who wish to join the house of Israel” (*ibid.*, 4–5). Finally, I have argued throughout that Galatians never describes the Christian gentiles as (needing to be) incorporated into Israel; that position belongs to the agitators. Instead, Paul portrays Christ as enabling the Jews to share in the gentiles’ blessing.

35 Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 113, 119.

Put another way, the allegory does not seek to trace lines of descent from the two matriarchs, nor does it raise questions such as how we should understand the status of Abraham's pre-Sinaitic descendants through Isaac. Paul does not reinterpret the Hagar-Sarah story so much as he applies it as a paradigmatic precedent for the current situation.³⁶

Interpreters often assume that he applies this precedent to establish the enslaved and free statuses of the groups with whom he respectively associates the two mothers. Such a purpose, however, would require Paul to link these groups to the women on some other basis than their shared enslaved/free status lest his argument become circular. Although the etymological or geographical explanations of Hagar's connection to Sinai in 4:25 and the identification of a *gezerah shawah* connecting the formerly barren Sarah to the Jerusalem above in 4:27 could potentially provide such alternative grounds for association, I have already argued for the problematical nature of these interpretations.³⁷ The argument accordingly works only if slavery and freedom form the grounds on which Paul associates the various entities with Hagar and Sarah, but this conclusion then makes it unlikely that he uses these same connections to prove anyone's free or enslaved status. The allegory would add nothing to the argument.

Recognizing this problem, Lagrange suggests that 4:21–30 instead seeks to prove from scripture Paul's earlier contention about the temporary nature of the law while at the same time identifying the Jews with Hagar—and Christians with Sarah—so as to destroy any possibility of Jewish race-based claims.³⁸ Without endorsing the particulars, I suggest that Lagrange's discernment of two distinct purposes provides a helpful insight for understanding 4:24–27. As a consideration of the two defended claims in this passage will show, the main argument in 4:24–27 does indeed seek to limit the scope of the Sinaitic διαθήκη, albeit not through scriptural appeals. Perhaps more surprisingly, the analysis will also show that the two mothers actually have nothing to do with this main argument, hence the need for a second purpose to account for their presence.

36 Contra Fowl, "Abraham's Story," 78, 4:21–31 does not constitute a rhetorical "act of power . . . [claiming] (either implicitly or explicitly) that there is something obscure, inadequate or misleading about a conventional interpretation and that a particular interpreter, in this case Paul, has the means to correct this." The indictment of Castelli, "Allegories," 243, that Paul uses an antihegemonic reading strategy (i.e., allegory) to replace one hegemonic reading with another similarly seems to miss the mark.

37 See Chapter 7.

38 Lagrange, *Galates*, 118–19.

Paul's identification of Hagar and Sarah as two *διαθήκαι* in 4:24–27 contains two claims that he justifies with *γάρ* clauses.³⁹ The first *γάρ* clause (4:25) links the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* (technically, “this Hagar-Sinai mountain”) with the present Jerusalem whereas the second (4:27) links “us” to the free Jerusalem above by establishing a connection between the heavenly city and the Abrahamic *διαθήκη*.⁴⁰ Each explanatory clause thus associates a *διαθήκη* with a Jerusalem, but they establish these associations for very different purposes. The former uses the slave-bearing nature of the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* to link the *διαθήκη* to the enslaved present Jerusalem rather than to the free Jerusalem above; the latter links the Abrahamic *διαθήκη* to the free Jerusalem above to establish the *διαθήκη*'s free-bearing nature. This shift, which accounts for the lack of correspondence in the development of the two sides, befits an argument presuming the general enslavement of all humanity to the *στοιχία*: Paul can assume the slave-bearing nature of the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* but must demonstrate that the Abrahamic *διαθήκη* produces free children. In other words, given the context of humanity's enslavement to the *στοιχία*, Paul can connect the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* directly to the slave mother but must invoke the Jerusalem above as a middle term when connecting the Abrahamic *διαθήκη* to the free mother.

Paul, of course, never explicitly completes the association of the Abrahamic *διαθήκη* with Sarah, the free mother. Similarly, although he uses Hagar to highlight slavery as the basis for the connection between the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* and the present Jerusalem,⁴¹ she does not actually contribute anything to the association. Significantly, then, the two women have no real role in the argument, serving only to introduce the motifs of slavery and freedom that Paul could have gleaned simply from the two Jerusalems. The focus of the argument in 4:24–27 falls squarely on the exclusive and permanent contrast that the combination of these two defended claims establishes between the slave-oriented Sinaitic *διαθήκη*/present Jerusalem on the one hand and the free Abrahamic *διαθήκη*/Jerusalem above on the other. Accordingly, establishing this distinction with its inherent limiting of the scope of the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* constitutes the passage's primary purpose.

39 Galatians 4:24 also contains a *γάρ* clause grounding Paul's claim that “these things are *ἀλληγορούμενα*” in his identification of the two women as *διαθήκαι* and, accordingly, in the ensuing argument. Since this use of *γάρ* appeals to Paul's linking of Sarah and Hagar with the *διαθήκαι* rather than helping to elucidate it, I do not consider it above.

40 For “this Hagar-Sinai mountain,” see p. 263. For the connection of the Abrahamic *διαθήκη* with the free Jerusalem above, see pp. 284–85.

41 See pp. 271–73.

If the women serve no role in the argument, then why does Paul introduce them and their potentially controversial dynamic in the first place? Looking at how the women feature in the rest of the argument for clues reveals that they effectively determine the inheritance status of their sons according to the citation of Gen 21:10 in Gal 4:30. The women thus enable Paul to ground the inheritance argument in scripture. As significant as this function is, it still does not adequately explain the motivation for their inclusion: since the citation mentions the women's sons as well, the Ishmael/Isaac contrast in 4:28–29 could have achieved the same purpose by itself. Furthermore, the argument's concluding inference in 4:31—"therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman"—focuses solely on establishing the line of "our" matrilineal descent, not on establishing "our" inheritance or even "our" freedom. Therefore, while the women might have little relevance to the argument in 4:24–27, establishing the proper maternal line *in and of itself* seems to constitute a principal purpose of the larger argument.

It remains to show what Paul gains by establishing these lines of maternal descent. While Lagrange's proposal that Paul subverts Jewish race-based claims of privilege by linking the Jews with Hagar is possible, the more straightforward contrast between the flesh-born Ishmael and the promise-/Spirit-born Isaac in 4:28–29 could have achieved that result without the unnecessary complications introduced by the Hagar/Sarah contrast. I therefore suggest instead that Paul invokes Hagar and Sarah in 4:24–27 because they enable him to align the contrasting children of the *δαθῆσαι* in 4:24–27 with the Ishmael/Isaac contrast in 4:28–29 without equating the two. In other words, the introduction of Hagar and Sarah serves to invalidate what has become the standard interpretation of this passage, namely, the assumption that all the contrasts in 4:21–5:1 describe the same two groups.

Of course, this suggestion makes sense only if Paul associates different groups with the Hagar/Sarah typology than he associates with the Ishmael/Isaac typology. The contrast of the flesh-born Ishmael with the promise-born Isaac most readily signifies a contrast between Jews as Abraham's physical descendants and gentile Christians as Abraham's descendants through the promise to bless the nations. I accordingly propose that 4:24–27 instead distinguishes non-Christian Jews from Christian Jews. The Sarah-Isaac connection then enables Paul to link Jewish and gentile Christians together.

Several lines of evidence support this analysis. First, reading "our" mother as a reference to Christian Jews remains consistent with Paul's practice throughout Gal 3–4 of using first-person plural references to identify with his Jewish heritage, especially in contrast to his second-person references to the gentile

Galatians (e.g., 3:13–14; 4:5–7; cf. ὑμεῖς, 4:28).⁴² Second, a distinction between non-Christian and Christian Jews offers a plausible explanation for the omission of any reference to Sarah in 4:26–27: her status as the physical mother of all Jews complicates a simple invocation of her as a type for Christian Jews. After all, while Sarah does exemplify the free woman, she is also the “one with a husband” (4:27) whose physical progeny will one day be outstripped.⁴³ Third, the understanding of διαθήκη as “testament” itself implies an internal Jewish discussion. As previous chapters have argued, only Jews participate in the Abrahamic (and, obviously, the Sinaitic) διαθήκαι; gentiles receive the Spirit of adoption not through incorporation into the Abrahamic διαθήκη but as the beneficiaries of God’s promise to bless the nations (3:8–10, 14; cf. 4:28: “you [ὑμεῖς] . . . are children of *promise*”).⁴⁴ Most decisively, then, the indications of adoption in Isa 54:1 would necessarily imply the involvement of the Abrahamic διαθήκη—as the context established by Gal 4:24 clearly indicates that it should—only if 4:24–27 concerns Jews alone.

More general considerations point to the same conclusion. The identification of Hagar and Sarah with two διαθήκαι that obtain children suggests that the διαθήκαι signify lines of Abrahamic descent. Significantly, both women give birth physically, suggesting that 4:24–27 serves to divide Abraham’s physical children.⁴⁵ Similarly, the focus on Jerusalem—the city that epitomizes Judaism and, thus, Abraham’s heirs through Isaac and Jacob—also suggests a concern with Jews, especially if, as I have argued, 4:24–27 seeks to sever an assumed connection between the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above by establishing different membership criteria.

Paul’s argument in 4:24–27 thus distinguishes between non-Christian and Christian Jews, respectively assigning them to the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above based on their participation in the two διαθήκαι that

42 Cf. Witherington, *Grace*, 336: “Verse 28 returns to direct address . . . probably indicating that the referent and the one addressed in the previous quotation of Isaiah is someone *other* than the Galatians” (emphasis original). Witherington, however, sees 4:27 as a reference to Paul. According to my reading, the πάντων that a few manuscripts insert between μήτηρ and ἡμῶν does not, contra Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 327 n. 55, accurately capture “der Intention des Apostels.”

43 The same tension exists in the other explanations as well, but it becomes more pronounced if the passage distinguishes between types of Jews.

44 For analysis of 4:28, see pp. 313–15.

45 Paul discusses the significance of their sons being born respectively according to the flesh and promise in 4:28–29 but not here.

determine Abrahamic sonship.⁴⁶ The Sinaitic διαθήκη gives birth (cf. γεννώσα, 4:24) to Abraham's physical heirs that compose the present Jerusalem; the Abrahamic διαθήκη adopts them into the Jerusalem above as his divine sons. As seemingly all interpreters agree, the agitators advocate the gentiles' incorporation into the Sinaitic διαθήκη. Paul combats this suggestion in 4:24–27 by arguing not that gentile Christians have a different path to Abrahamic sonship—he will make this argument in 4:28—but rather that not even Jewish Christians still trace their Abrahamic descent through Sinai.

In other words, as in 3:6–14 and 3:21–4:11, Paul first considers the Jewish situation, here addressing the overlap that occurs with Christian Jews, i.e., with those who can claim Abrahamic descent *both* according to the flesh and according to the promise/Spirit. He clearly resolves the ambiguity in favor of the latter: the Jerusalem above is now “our mother.” Furthermore, his bifurcation of Abraham's children into slave and free means that his identification of Jewish Christians with the free Jerusalem above not only removes them from the ranks of the enslaved present Jerusalem but also aligns them with Sarah and severs their ties with the slave-bearing Sinaitic διαθήκη “which is Hagar.”

Sons of Flesh and Sons of Promise in 4:28: Distinguishing Jews and Gentile Christians as Sons of Abraham

Gal 4:28

ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ.

²⁸*And you are brothers according to [the pattern of] Isaac, children of promise.*

Having explored the typological significance of the mothers' respective free and enslaved statuses (4:24–27; cf. 4:22), Paul shifts the discussion in Gal 4:28 to the typological significance of the nature of each son's birth—i.e., whether it proceeded according to flesh (κατὰ σάρκα) or through promise (δι' ἐπαγγελίας)—a theme first introduced in 4:23. Before proceeding to 4:28, we should therefore consider how these descriptions characterize and distinguish Ishmael and Isaac, both of whom become Abraham's sons through physical birth. Francis Watson, for instance, suggests that the characterizations respectively signify human initiative (i.e., “human action as the precondition for divine saving

46 This conclusion undermines the suggestion of Maier, “Psalm 87,” 481, 485, that Paul's analysis derives from the portrayal of Zion as a mother of gentiles in Ps [LXX] 86:5.

action”) and divine initiative (i.e., God’s “unconditional promise to future action on behalf of the addressee”).⁴⁷ This distinction, however, cannot stand since Isaac’s conception still required a “human action.”⁴⁸ The shift in preposition from *κατὰ σάρκα* to *δι’ ἐπαγγελίας* in 4:23 also argues against Watson’s reading: Paul does not contrast “flesh” directly with “promise” as we would expect if he were contrasting parallel elements such as human and divine initiative.⁴⁹ He does, however, contrast “flesh” directly with “Spirit” (*κατὰ σάρκα* versus *κατὰ πνεῦμα*) in the parallel construction of 4:29, suggesting, as most scholars agree, that *κατὰ σάρκα* signifies Ishmael’s strictly natural birth whereas *δι’ ἐπαγγελίας* and *κατὰ πνεῦμα* signify the divine involvement in Isaac’s birth.⁵⁰

Moving to 4:28, Paul begins this new phase of the argument by identifying the gentile Galatian believers (“you”⁵¹) as “brothers according to [the pattern of] Isaac, children of promise.”⁵² As Charles Cosgrove notes, Paul does not ground this claim either in the preceding citation of Isa 54:1 (as indicated by the coordinating conjunction *δέ* in 4:28) or in the typological comparison that follows (as indicated by the *ἀλλά* in 4:29). Rather, he simply asserts it.⁵³ The asserting of this claim then suggests that 4:28 does not seek to prove the

47 Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 206–7. Cf. Cothenet, “L’arrière-plan,” 458; Hays, “Galatians,” 301, who glosses *κατὰ σάρκα* as “‘fleshly’ stratagem.” Torsten Löfstedt, “The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah: Gal 4:21–31,” *EstBib* 58 (2000): 475–94, 478, adds a moral dimension, suggesting that *κατὰ σάρκα* portrays Ishmael as “sinfully conceived, the result of human reasoning going against God’s will.”

48 Bligh, *Galatians*, 398–400, considers the improbable case that *δι’ ἐπαγγελίας* portrays Isaac as divinely conceived with no biological contribution from Abraham but ultimately rejects it based on Rom 4:19–20.

49 On the significance of the prepositional switch, see Martin, “Brother,” 15 n. 39.

50 E.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 217, 223.

51 Although some manuscripts (e.g., $\aleph$ A C D^e K P Ψ 614) conform 4:28 to 4:26 by reading *ἡμεῖς . . . ἐσμέν*, Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 528, rightly prefers *ὕμεῖς . . . ἐστέ* based on the early and widespread support (e.g., P⁴⁶ B D* G 33 1739 it^d, ξ syr^{pal} cop^{sa}) for this more difficult reading.

52 For *ἀδελφοί* as nominative rather than vocative, see Martin, “Brother,” 12–16. He points out that *ἀδελφοί* + *κατά* represents a common construction for defining the nature of the specified brotherhood. In this case, “children of promise” seems to explain the significance of being brothers *κατὰ Ἰσαάκ*. While Paul’s expression could refer to a brotherhood shared internally among the Galatians, the implicit contrast with brothers “according to [the pattern of] Ishmael” suggests that it instead relates them to Abraham’s other children, i.e., the Jews.

53 Cosgrove, “Law,” 220. Contra, e.g., Longenecker, *Galatians*, 216, who suggests that the “*δέ* functions here as a consequential connective (‘so’),” a suggestion that has no basis in the semantic range of *δέ*. See LSJ, “*δέ*,” 371: “adversative and copulative Particle”; BDAG, “*δέ*,” 213: “used . . . to express contrast or simple continuation.”

Abrahamic descent of the Galatian believers, a point that Paul has already established (e.g., 3:29). Indeed, the verse seems to assume this relationship, focusing instead simply on locating the Galatians within the flesh/promise typology of Abraham's two sons.

Since the gentiles clearly do not descend from Abraham “according to flesh,” their identification as the alternative “children of promise” hardly requires any support.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Paul could easily have constructed a positive argument for the Galatians as children of promise according to the pattern of Isaac. Isaac, of course, owes his miraculous birth to God's promises to give Abraham and his barren wife Sarah a son (Gen 15:4; 18:10, 14; cf. 21:1–2). The gentile Galatians similarly receive the Spirit of divine sonship as a result of God's promises to bless the nations ἐν Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:3, 22:18; cf. 18:18), promises that Paul has already discussed in 3:8–10. This same Spirit then unites the gentiles with the Jewish Christians in Christ, thereby qualifying the gentile Christians as sons of Abraham as well. That Paul does not review this evidence here suggests that, by this point in his argument, he feels he can take the gentile believers' status as Abrahamic children of promise for granted.

If a flesh/promise typology makes locating gentile Christians within it rather straightforward, it creates problems for the Jewish Christians. On the surface, a flesh/promise typology would seem to contrast Jews—i.e., Abraham's physical descendants—with the Christian gentiles who can call upon him as father only as a result of God's promise. In other words, a straightforward reading of the typology would seem to relegate all Jews, whether Christian or not, to the fleshly side of the equation. Paul therefore needs to make the case that Jewish Christians actually fall on the promissory side, a conclusion prefigured by his identifying the Galatians as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί). He turns to this task in 4:29.

Merging the Typologies in 4:29–30: The Union of Jew and Gentile in Christ as the Fulfillment of the Free Woman's Children of Promise

The preceding sections have argued that 4:24–28 develops two different typologies of Abrahamic descent. In 4:24–27, Paul uses the enslaved and free statuses of the two mothers to differentiate non-Christian Jews from Christian Jews. In 4:28, he uses the fleshly and promissory nature of the two sons' births to distinguish between Jews and Christian gentiles. The more straightforward

54 As Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 31, notes, the anarthrous nature of ἐπαγγελίας signals that the promise that gives birth to the Galatians differs from the promise that gave birth to Isaac.

application in the latter case accounts for its shorter length, but it also creates a problem: this straightforward application would seem to include Christian Jews on the fleshly side of the equation. At the same time, 4:24–27 fails to address the status of the gentile Christians with respect to the free woman.

To complete his argument, Paul accordingly needs to correlate the Jewish Christians' status as sons of the free woman (4:24–27) with the gentile Christians' status as children of promise (4:28) and vice versa. Establishing this correlation, I suggest, forms the primary task of 4:29–30, a task symbolized by the framing descriptions of the Galatians as "brothers" (ἀδελφοί) in 4:28 and 31 (cf. 1:11; 3:15; 4:12; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18). As I intend to show, the two ἀλλά clauses that compose 4:29–30 develop these points chiastically with respect to the two typologies in 4:24–28: Gal 4:29 addresses the role of Jewish Christians in the flesh/promise typology of 4:28, while Gal 4:30 addresses the role of gentile Christians in the slave/free typology of 4:24–27.⁵⁵ Structurally, then, the clauses function similarly to the pairs of consecutive ἵνα clauses in 3:14 and 4:5.

*Locating Jewish Christians in the Flesh (Jew) / Promise
(Gentile Christian) Typology (4:29)*

Gal 4:29

²⁹ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα, οὕτως καὶ νῦν.

²⁹*But just as then the one born according to flesh persecuted the one [born] according to Spirit, so also now.*

55 For alternative chiastic proposals that involve the entire passage, see Sellin, "Hagar," 65–66; Bouwman, "Hagar," 45; Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 141. Sellin sees the passage developing around the allegory in 4:24–27: he pairs 4:21 and 4:31 as intro and conclusion, 4:22–23 and 4:28–30 as scripture reference and application. He further notes that lexical similarities link 4:22 to 4:30 and 4:23 to 4:29, and that 4:24–27 itself exhibits an internal chiasm pairing the mothers in 4:24b–25a/4:27 and the Jerusalem in 4:25b/26. Bouwman differs only in pairing 4:28 with the claim about Sinai in 4:24b–c. Bachmann's proposal differs from Sellin's chiasm in three main ways: 1) he understands 5:1 as the concluding counterpart to 4:21; 2) he must accordingly group 4:30–31 together as the counterpart to 4:22; and 3) he agrees with Bouwman in linking 4:24a–c with 4:28 as discussing the covenants of slavery and promise, respectively. These disagreements—particularly the differing treatments of 4:28—highlight the problematical areas that keep each of these larger proposals from being compelling. Bligh, *Galatians*, 390, proposes an altogether different and more awkward chiasm with 4:25c ("a slave and the mother of slaves") at its center: A. 4:21–22/4:30, B. 4:23–24a/4:28–29, C. 4:24b/4:27, D. 4:24c/4:26c, E. 4:24d/4:26aβ, F. 4:25a–b/4:26aα, G. 4:25c.

Galatians 4:29 further defines the flesh/promise typology: not only is one son born according to the flesh and the other through a promise, but the fleshly son also persecutes (ἐδίωκεν) the one born according to Spirit. The verse thus introduces the theme of persecution into the typology and recharacterizes the one born through promise as the one born according to Spirit. How do these modifications fit into Paul's argument? Any answer must account for two features of Gal 4:29: its implicit invocation of Gen 21:9 and the introductory ἄλλα that connects it to the identification of the Galatians as "children of promise" in 4:28. I will examine each of these features in turn.

I begin with the allusion to Gen 21:9. Curiously, the biblical account nowhere describes Ishmael as "persecuting" Isaac: Gen 21:9 states only that Sarah sees Ishmael "playing" or "jesting" (παίζοντα, LXX; cf. קצח, MT) with him.⁵⁶ The key theme that Paul introduces into the typology thus has no explicit grounding in the Abraham story.

Before considering the exegetical implications of this observation, I should first note that the agitators seem unlikely to dispute Paul's substitution of "persecution" for "playing." The severity of Sarah's reaction—a demand for the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael in Gen 21:10 that Paul cites in Gal 4:30—often indicated to later rabbinic interpreters that the seemingly innocuous description in Gen 21:9 euphemized a more serious offense, with proposals ranging from mockery over inheritance to idolatry to sexual immorality to shooting arrows at Isaac in an attempt to kill him (cf. Prov 26:18–19).⁵⁷ As most scholars note, Paul's lack of justification for his substitution suggests that such interpretations were probably already current in his day. A few interpreters alternatively propose that the characterization reflects the subsequent hostility that arose between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac (e.g., Ps 83:4–6),⁵⁸ but the extra layer of figuration that this reading requires makes it more easily refutable and therefore less likely. Even if the persecution represents an original Pauline gloss, however, challenging this interpretation would require the agitators to defend the justness of Ishmael's actions toward Isaac, thereby calling Sarah's divinely affirmed judgment into question. Such a scenario seems

56 The MT does not have "with Isaac" (בצחק), but the phrase could easily have been omitted as a result of homoioteleuton: קצח בצחק. Regardless, Paul's citation in 4:30 suggests that he is working with the LXX here.

57 See *Gen. Rab.* 53.11, *t. Soṭah* 6:6, and the texts discussed in R. Le Déaut, "Traditions Targumiques dans le corpus paulinien? (Hebr 11, 4 et 12, 24; Gal 4, 29–30; 11 Cor 3, 16)," *Bib* 42 (1961): 28–48, 37–43; Callaway, "Mistress," 98–99; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 200–206, 217.

58 E.g., Wagner, "Les enfants," 294; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 184.

improbable, especially if, as I will argue below, the agitators essentially agree with Paul's typological conclusion (cf. Gal 6:12).

On the positive side, the lack of any reference to persecution in the Genesis account does indicate that the present circumstances provide the impetus for Paul's characterization of Ishmael's offense as "persecuting."⁵⁹ This observation then argues against Angela Standhartinger's proposal that 4:29 identifies a potential objection ("Einwand") to the preceding identification in 4:28. In other words, Standhartinger effectively suggests that a lack of persecution by the "fleshly" children threatens to undermine the Galatians' status as children of promise. According to Standhartinger, Paul subsequently explains this lack in 4:30 by arguing that, in Christ, God has permanently cast out the "slavery" that motivates such persecution (cf. 3:28).⁶⁰ Although this proposal makes good sense of the initial ἀλλά, the absence of any such persecution in the Genesis text means that Paul would have no reason to raise the issue if the persecution were not a present reality.

The allusion to Gen 21:9 has another significant implication as well: it suggests that Gal 4:29 helps determine the relevance of the citation of Gen 21:10 in 4:30. This insight, however, challenges the relatively recent suggestions that Paul's overall argument contrasts slavery with freedom as a way of reorienting the Galatians toward freedom.⁶¹ The command to expel the slaves in 4:30 does not require a reference to the Galatians' persecution in order to suggest that those on the side of slavery will not inherit. Accordingly, establishing a τότε/νῦν contrast to indicate the viability of slavery and freedom as options throughout history would also not require a reference to persecution.⁶² Nor does Paul need 4:29 to introduce the Galatians into the story, as Alain Gignac suggests,⁶³ since Gal 4:28 has already identified the Galatians with Isaac. This type of interpretation thus finds itself unable to provide a compelling reason for the insertion of 4:29. At most, the verse would seek to encourage the Galatians toward freedom by identifying their persecutors with the alternative option, but this concretizing of slavery in the persecutors runs counter to the tendency for abstrac-

59 So also Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 139–40.

60 Standhartinger, "Zur Freiheit," 300. She thus interprets the persecution as a *potential* present reality: "die geistlich gezeugten Kinder *verfolgt würden*" (emphasis added).

61 See Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 151; Gignac, "Paul," 479; Brawley, "Contextuality," 115.

62 Brawley, "Contextuality," 115, attributes this significance to 4:29.

63 Gignac, "Paul," 479: "Lorsqu'il raconte à nouvelle frais l'histoire des deux frères, c'est pour dire à ses narrataires à quels protagonistes ils doivent s'identifier, et que cette intrigue est la leur."

tion that this interpretation requires, suggesting that Paul's argument actually lies in a different direction.

Indeed, for most interpreters, 4:29 expands the flesh/promise typology in order to confirm the Galatians' identity as children of promise, explain their current experience of persecution as typologically grounded, and/or identify the persecutors with the fleshly descendants of Abraham. The *ἀλλά* that opens 4:29 troubles all of these interpretations, however, since they all build on or support the identification in 4:28 whereas, according to LSJ, *ἀλλά* always involves some sort of contrast or limitation.⁶⁴ The NIV accordingly omits the conjunction, and many scholars simply ignore it in their discussions of this verse. Richard Longenecker at least acknowledges the problem: "On the face of it, *ἀλλά* introduces a fact that is in contrast to the statement of v 28. Logically, however, it provides a transition to the sentence of v 29 (so 'and') rather than a contrast with v 28." Tellingly, he offers no lexical support for this reading; it derives solely from his understanding of the argument's logic. Betz grounds his similar understanding of the conjunction as "a transition to the next argument rather than an indication of contrast" in Bauer's third definition ("other matter for additional consideration"), but all of the examples cited in BDAG involve an implicit contrast with the preceding material.⁶⁵

Some scholars do take the contrasting nature of *ἀλλά* seriously. I have already noted Standhartinger's proposal that it signals a potential objection to the identification in 4:28. The aforementioned problems with her interpretation then suggest that the *ἀλλά* introduces a more elliptical contrast. Mußner, e.g., suggests that the conjunction presumes an implied phrase along the lines of "History repeats!" with 4:29 accordingly specifying an additional, more sinister implication of that repetition.⁶⁶ More commonly, interpreters understand 4:29 to contrast with the potential implication of 4:28 that, as children according to Isaac, the Galatians should be free from persecution. The verse would thus address the seeming incongruity of the Galatians' being children of promise (4:28) who yet (*ἀλλά*) are persecuted (4:29) by portraying that persecution as a typological reality.⁶⁷

64 LSJ, "*ἀλλά*," 67–68; BDAG, "*ἀλλά*," 44–45.

65 Longenecker, *Galatians*, 216; Betz, *Galatians*, 249. See BDAG, "*ἀλλά*," 45, meaning 3, which cites Matt 11:8; John 7:49; Rom 8:35–37; 1 Cor 10:20; Gal 2:3; and Justin, *1 Apol.* 3.1, 10.1. (Betz references an earlier edition.) Cf. LSJ, "*ἀλλά*," 68, meaning II.1.

66 Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 329: "Die Geschichte wiederholt sich!"

67 So Moo, *Galatians*, 309; Bouwman, "Hagar," 3143; Burton, *Galatians*, 266; Meyer, "Galatians," 210. Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 444, who suggests *ἀλλά* superficially contrasts a

This latter contrast represents the best explanation of the ἁλλὰ if the identification of the promised children remains consistent from 4:28 to 4:29, but even it fits rather poorly into the context. Nothing in the letter suggests that the Galatians' "persecuted" state has called or would call their status as children of promise into question—to the contrary, the preceding instances of διῶκω in Gal 1:13, 23 both refer to Paul's persecution of the Judean church (cf. 5:11, 6:12)—and 4:30 proceeds to discuss the fate of the persecutors rather than further developing the persecution's necessity. This purported concern to justify the persecution of Abraham's promised descendants thus emerges from and leads nowhere. The current nature of the persecution in 4:29 also troubles this interpretation. That is to say, if the experience of persecution were still only a future possibility, then the Galatians might indeed question its congruity with being a child of promise. As it is, Paul's identification of the Galatians as children of promise in 4:28 already takes the current persecution into account.

I accordingly suggest that the ἁλλὰ instead signifies a shift in the identity of Abraham's promised descendants from 4:28 to 4:29. In short, I propose that Paul expands the typology so as to include Jewish Christians with the gentile Christians ("you") identified in 4:28 as children of promise.⁶⁸ The ἁλλὰ then signals that the simple identification of gentile Christians with Isaac does not tell the whole story. Yes, the gentile Christians clearly stand on the promissory side of the equation, *but* they are not the only ones. Yes, gentile Christians align with Isaac, *but* the typology does not therefore indicate that all of Abraham's children according to flesh therefore align with Ishmael.

The two ways in which Paul expands the typology point to this conclusion as well. First he introduces the theme of persecution. Although many interpreters—especially scholars of the two-missions persuasion—identify the contemporary persecutors with those compelling the Galatians to circumcise,⁶⁹

positive identity claim with a negative persecution claim, but who nevertheless translates the conjunction as "moreover."

68 So also Broer, "Vertreibe," 187, 189: "V. 29 [zeigt] daß die Galater [i.e., die Heidenchristen] nicht allein gemeint sein können... Paulus an einer Beziehung des 'nach dem Geist Gezeugten' nur auf die Galater auch nicht interessiert sein kann."

69 So, e.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 444–45; Tolmie, *Persuading*, 170; Willits, "Isa 54,1," 207; de Boer, "Quotation," 383; Stanley, *Arguing*, 132; Witherington, *Grace*, 337–38; Williams, *Galatians*, 131; Fowl, "Abraham's Story," 89; Matera, *Galatians*, 178; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 216–17; Gaston, *Paul*, 90; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 331; Hays, "Galatians," 305–6, all of whom then further identify the agitators as the contemporary objects of the expulsion command in 4:30. Cf. Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 181, who instead sees 4:30 as a warning to the Galatians. Burton, *Galatians*, 266, also opts for this understanding of the persecution, but then curiously sees 4:30 as proclaiming the rejection of the Jews more generally. Even interpreters

such readings produce several problems. In the first place, Paul's characterization of his addressees in 4:21 as "those desiring to be under law" (οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι) indicates that the Galatians themselves would probably not have viewed the agitators' work as "persecution."⁷⁰ Galatians 4:29 would therefore have to suggest this viewpoint to the Galatians,⁷¹ but such over-the-top rhetoric could easily (and foreseeably) backfire given the continuing presence in the community of the apparently popular "agitators." Furthermore, the ἀλλὰ could then retain its contrasting nature only if it portrayed this "persecution" as an unexpected (hence, ἀλλὰ) yet necessary implication of the typological identification in 4:28.⁷² Typology, however, does not admit of such predictive necessity, not to mention that Paul creates this typological correspondence only by importing the reference to persecution into the biblical text.

More decisively, "[sons of Abraham] according to flesh" would be a singularly ineffective way to characterize the Jewish (i.e., circumcised / law observant) Christian agitators: it would neither limit the implicated to Christian Jews nor would it exclude "enlightened" Christian Jews such as Paul. Since Paul definitely excludes the latter and most scholars adopt this interpretation because they believe Paul would also exclude non-Christian Jews, this interpretation would effectively render meaningless the designation "according to flesh" and its counterpart "according to Spirit." Finally, Cosgrove rightly questions whether Paul would ever label such theological debates and disagreements—however serious they might be—as "persecution."⁷³ Indeed, the letter's four other references to persecution—two instances describe Paul's earlier attempts to destroy the Judean churches (1:13, 23), one appeals to the suffering Paul undergoes for

who see 4:29 as a general reference to Jewish persecution of Christians often highlight the agitators' role in such persecution. See, e.g., Lagrange, *Galates*, 131; Ellicott, *Galatians*, 115.

70 Cf. Siker, *Disinheriting*, 47 n. 56.

71 Tolmie, *Persuading*, 174.

72 I.e., "you are brothers according to Isaac, but this designation implies that you are also persecuted like Isaac [and therefore you should regard the agitators as persecutors]." Significantly, the ἀλλὰ could not serve to explain the seeming incongruity of being a promised yet persecuted Abrahamic descendant if the Galatians do not recognize their persecuted status.

73 Cosgrove, "Law," 229 n. 39: "The term διώχω is never used in the New Testament of internal strife." Cf. Cosgrove, *Cross*, 83–84. Similarly: Moo, *Galatians*, 310; Byrne, "Jeruselems," 228; Schlier, *Galater*, 226–27; Robinson, "Distinction," 43; Meyer, "Galatians," 210–11; Dunn, *Galatians*, 257. See also Ernst Baasland, "Persecution: A Neglected Feature in the Letter to the Galatians," *ST* 38 (1984): 135–50, 136: "διώχω functions more or less as a technical term for persecution of Christians."

preaching the cross rather than circumcision (5:11), and one portrays the agitators themselves as wanting to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ (6:12)—all suggest the (likely physical) suffering that Christians receive at the hands of Jews. We have no compelling reason to read the persecution in 4:29 any differently. In fact, Paul's apparent expectation that the agitators would agree with his typological conclusion (cf. 6:12) even explains the freedom he feels to import the reference to persecution into the biblical account. This shift in typology from flesh/promise in 4:28 to persecutor/persecuted in 4:29 then allows for a more favorable mapping of Christian Jews since they clearly share in being persecuted by those born "according to flesh."⁷⁴

The substitution of "according to Spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα) for "through promise" (δι' ἐπαγγελίας) as the counterpart to the one born "according to flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα) similarly enables the identification of Christian Jews with the promissory side of the equation. With regard to Isaac, the characterization "according to Spirit" must refer to the Spirit's supernatural work in overcoming Sarah's barrenness.⁷⁵ As the main substance of the Lord's promise to bless the gentiles (cf. 3:14),⁷⁶ the Spirit also plays a critical role in relating the gentiles to Abraham as his promised children, making Paul's substitution apt. "According to Spirit," however, also covers a third group. Reception of the Spirit qualifies Christian Jews as Abrahamic seed, thereby relating them to Abraham in a new way and distinguishing them from their fellow Jews. Christian Jews, however, do not really receive the Spirit "through promise" in contrast to a more fleshly basis: although Abraham's physical descendants were included in the original promise and Paul can speak of their receiving "the promise of the Spirit" (3:14b) when emphasizing their solidarity with the gentiles, the Jews receive the Spirit most directly as part of their inheritance through the Abrahamic διαθήκη (cf. 4:1–6), i.e., the means highlighted in 4:26–27 that accrues to them by virtue of their physical descent. Since, in context, "through promise" would suffice to indicate gentile Christians and Isaac but have only an ambiguous

74 Cf. Robinson, "Distinction," 43: "There are many references in Paul's writings to persecution of Christian Jews by their unbelieving compatriots, but there is little or no ground for thinking the Jews persecuted Gentile believers." All four of the other instances of διώκω in Galatians refer to the persecution of specifically Jewish Christians.

75 Contra Burton, *Galatians*, 266, who suggests that κατὰ πνεῦμα must either refer only to the Galatians—i.e., it appears here in the place of κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν by "a species of trajection"—or else indicate that the promise of Isaac's birth also implies the ultimate bestowal of the Spirit. The first option seems overly speculative. The second falters in that Gal 3:8, 14 relates the promise of the Spirit to God's post-*Aqedah* promise in Gen 22:18 (see pp. 124–25 above), not to the promise of Isaac's birth.

76 See pp. 128–31.

applicability to Jewish Christians, the switch to “according to Spirit” therefore seems intended to broaden the typology to include Jewish Christians as well.

Galatians 4:29 thus expands the flesh/promise typology so as to include Jewish Christians with the gentile Christians on the promissory side of the typology. This understanding accounts for the contrasting ἀλλά that opens 4:29 as well as offering a plausible rationale for the ways in which Paul has modified the typology. As the next section will argue, it also explains the connection between the verse’s allusion to Gen 21:9 and the citation of Gen 21:10 in Gal 4:30.

*Locating Gentile Christians in the Slave (Non-Christian Jew) /
Free (Christian Jew) Typology (4:30)*

Gal 4:30

³⁰ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ἡ γραφή; Ἐκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς, οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

³⁰*But what does the scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”*

Having made the case in 4:29 that Jewish Christians align with gentile Christians and Isaac as Spirit-based children of promise, Paul returns to the slave woman/free woman typology in 4:30 through a citation of Gen 21:10. The two main interpretations of the verse accordingly reflect the two predominant ways of understanding the slave/free contrast discussed above, i.e., as contrasting either Jews and Christians or law-observant and law-free Christian missions to the gentiles. Adherents of the former view tend to interpret the citation as proclaiming the exclusion of the Jews in favor of the Christians.⁷⁷ Adherents of the two-missions view, in contrast, typically emphasize the citation’s initial imperative as a command for the Galatians to “cast out” (ἐκβαλε) the agitators

77 E.g., Fung, *Galatians*, 214–15; Borse, *Galater*, 176–77; Burton, *Galatians*, 267; Oepke, *Galater*, 152; Lietzmann, *Galater*, 33; Meyer, “Galatians,” 211; Ellicott, *Galatians*, 115; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 184. Not all proponents of a Jew/Christian distinction interpret 4:30 as proclamation, however. Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 182, for instance, understands 4:30 as a warning; Dunn, *Galatians*, 258, as command. Betz, *Galatians*, 251, interprets it as both proclamation and warning. The suggestion of Standhartinger, “Zur Freiheit,” 300–301, that the citation proclaims the expulsion of slavery (cf. 3:28) in Christ and, thus, the expulsion of the resulting persecution seems hard to justify, either literarily or historically.

and their “children”/sympathizers.⁷⁸ A third view, however, seems to have the right idea: the citation functions neither as proclamation nor as command but as warning.⁷⁹

Susan Eastman makes a strong case for the citation as a warning. Agreeing with Martyn that the two women signify modes of birth rather than groups of people, Eastman contends that the typical two-missions interpretation essentially abandons this crucial insight when it comes to 4:30, identifying the slave woman to be expelled with the agitators and, accordingly, the free woman with Paul. Paul’s inclusion of himself as a *child* of the free Jerusalem above (cf. “our mother,” 4:26) and the contrast of his own labor pains (ὠδίνω) in 4:19 with the lack of labor pains (ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα) experienced by the free mother in 4:27, however, make such identifications awkward and counterintuitive.⁸⁰ In contrast to the sons, whom Paul clearly concretizes, the women should therefore remain metaphorical.⁸¹

The form of ἐκβαλε as a second-person singular imperative further troubles the interpretation of 4:30 as a command. As Eastman shows, Paul never uses a scriptural second-person singular imperative to command a group. In fact, when he cites the common Deuteronomic refrain to “drive out (ἐξαρᾷς) the wicked person” in 1 Cor 5:13, he pluralizes (ἐξάρατε) the original singular imperative to make the command’s application to the group clear.⁸² Eastman accordingly concludes that ἐκβαλε remains addressed, as in its OT context, to Abraham, with the citation then serving as a warning of what will happen to those who align with Hagar by choosing birth according to flesh (i.e., circumcision).

78 E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 446; de Boer, “Quotation,” 383; Hays, “Galatians,” 306; Witherington, *Grace*, 338; Hansen, *Galatians*, 150; Matera, *Galatians*, 178; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 332.

79 So, e.g., Susan G. Eastman, “Cast Out the Slave Woman and her Son: The Dynamics of Exclusion and Inclusion in Galatians 4.30,” *JSNT* 28 (2006): 309–36, 327; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 306; Cosgrove, “Law,” 233; Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 182. Scholars who see warning as at least part of the citation’s function include Betz, *Galatians*, 251; Tolmie, *Persuading*, 175. Cf. Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 143, who emphasizes the claim’s positive aspect by identifying it as “eine Re-Orientierung.”

80 Eastman, “Cast Out,” 317.

81 Perriman, “Rhetorical Strategy,” 41, accordingly suggests that Paul wants the Galatians to cast out “the Sinaitic covenant and its tradition of enslavement.” Cf. Di Mattei, “Allegory,” 121. While this suggestion does allow the women to remain consistently metaphorical, it cannot overcome the other problems identified above with a “command” interpretation of 4:30.

82 Eastman, “Cast Out,” 323; Eastman, *Mother Tongue*, 133. The refrain appears in Deut 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; and 24:7.

Eastman convincingly disputes the view of 4:30 as a command. Indeed, the significance of inheritance throughout Paul's Abrahamic argument and his apparent replacement of the LXX's μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ισαακ with μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας—language plainly derived from the slave/free contrast in Gal 4:21–5:1—suggest that the citation's main significance lies in its exclusion of the slave woman's son from the inheritance. If it represents a Pauline modification, the emphatic double negative οὐ . . . μὴ κληρονομήσει that replaces the LXX's οὐ . . . κληρονομήσει would further support this conclusion.⁸³ Finally, Jeffrey Siker's observation that both Paul's conclusion in 4:31 and his concluding exhortation in 5:1 refer to freedom without mentioning a need to cast anyone out shows that the command in 4:30 has at most a secondary role in the overall argument.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Eastman's analysis falters in adopting a key tenet of the two-missions view: she interprets the two mothers as metaphors for “the imposition of the Sinai covenant on Gentile Christians” and “the divine promise,” respectively.⁸⁵ Paul, however, identifies the women simply as two διαθήκαι—an identification echoed in the citation's correlation of the two women with the inheritance prospects of their respective sons—saying nothing about imposition on gentiles. Accordingly, as I argued with respect to 4:24–27, the two women do serve as metaphors of Abrahamic descent, but they represent the testaments that give birth to non-Christian Jews (i.e., the Sinaitic διαθήκη) and Christian Jews (i.e., the Abrahamic διαθήκη).

This understanding of the women as distinguishing between non-Christian and Christian Jews then clarifies how 4:30 functions as a warning. The passage begins in 4:21 with a rhetorical question asking whether those desiring to be under the law actually listen (ἀκούετε) to the law. As Joel Willitts notes, it is only here in Gal 4:30 that the law—now glossed as “the scripture” (ἡ γραφή)—finally “speaks” (λέγει).⁸⁶ Read with an emphasis on its latter half, the citation of Gen 21:10 corresponds to the initial question in 4:21 by warning that becoming children of Abraham through the fleshly “birth” of circumcision—and, thus, as the intervening material has established, becoming children of a slave

83 Byrne, “Jeruseleams,” 229. Paul's citation also omits the two demonstrative pronouns that appear after each instance of παιδίσκη in the LXX.

84 Siker, *Disinheriting*, 47. Cf. Bachmann, *Antijudaismus*, 138–43. Siker also questions whether Paul would have had the authority to command that the Galatians cast out “authoritative leaders.”

85 Eastman, “Cast Out,” 313.

86 Willitts, “Context,” 198, 207 n. 54. Cf. Hays, “Galatians,” 306; Wagner, “Les enfants,” 294.

woman—would disqualify the gentiles from sharing in Abraham's promised inheritance. The gentile Christians are indeed children of promise (4:28), but (ἀλλά, 4:30) they are children of promise and Abrahamic heirs because they are united with the Jewish Christian sons of the free woman in Christ. If they instead seek to establish Abrahamic descent by becoming Jews through the Sinaitic διαθήκη, they will effectively disinherit themselves.

The two ἀλλά phrases in Gal 4:29 and 30 accordingly complement one another. Just as 4:29 evokes Gen 21:9 to establish that Jewish Christians must unite with gentile Christians to receive the Spirit that makes them children of promise, so 4:30 cites Gen 21:10 to establish that gentile Christians must unite with Jewish Christians to inherit from Abraham as the sons of the free woman. In other words, these two verses use Gen 21:9–10 to connect the typology of the enslaved and free mothers with the typology of the sons born according to flesh and through promise. Galatians 4:21–30 therefore once again demonstrates the interdependence of Jews and gentiles in Christ.

Finally, I should note that this analysis of 4:30 as a warning in no way mitigates the clear implication that non-Christian Jews will not share in the promised inheritance. As Ingo Broer notes, this so-called “disinheriting of the Jews” has often led scholars to indict this passage as anti-Jewish.⁸⁷ Paul, however, has not “disinherited” anyone. He does deny Israel a share in the inheritance promised to the Abrahamic seed, but he denies them this share because he contends that Israel is not, nor has it ever been, Abraham's promised seed. The seed must be a son of both Abraham and God, a role that only Christ and the union of Jews and gentiles in him fulfill. Thus, while Paul's argument might disabuse the Jews of a popular misconception, it does not actually disinherit them since, according to Paul, they were never actually in line to receive this inheritance in the first place.

The Concluding Summary and Exhortation in 4:31–5:1: Gentile Christians Must Stand Firm with Their Free Jewish Counterparts

Gal 4:31–5:1

³¹Ἰδοὺ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐσμὲν παιδίσκης τέκνα ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρας. ^{5:1}τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἡλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.

87 Broer, “Vertreibe,” 175.

³¹*Therefore, brothers, we are not children of a slave woman but of the free woman.* ^{5:1a}*For freedom Christ set us free; ^bstand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Although scholars have proposed other endpoints,⁸⁸ the summary and derived exhortation in Gal 4:31–5:1 provide the most fitting conclusion for Paul's Abrahamic argument.⁸⁹ Supporting this interpretation, the inferential *διό* in 4:31 ties this verse to the preceding argument while the themes of freedom and slavery—themes that do not appear again explicitly until 5:13—unite 5:1 and 4:31 both to each other and to the larger Abrahamic argument in 4:21–30. The *ἴδε* and personal appeal (*ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν*) that open 5:2 then signal the next phase of Paul's argument, which discusses the implications of circumcision for a person's relationship to the law and to Christ.⁹⁰

As it has throughout this analysis, identifying whom the first-person plurals signify proves critical to understanding 4:31–5:1. A scholarly consensus regards them as inclusive of all Christians.⁹¹ In favor of this reading, 4:29–30 has just established the unity of Jewish and gentile Christians as children of promise and of the free woman. Paul also prefaces his conclusion by again addressing the Galatians with the familial “brothers” in 4:31. Furthermore, the exhortation in 5:1b for the Galatians not to submit to a yoke of slavery “again” could easily suggest that Paul includes them in the “us” whom Christ has freed in 5:1a.

Nevertheless, a reading that limits Paul's first-person plural references to Jewish Christians better fits the argument. In the first place, this reading maintains the consistency of Paul's practice throughout his Abrahamic argument of using the first-person plurals to highlight his Jewish background.

88 For 4:30 as the end of the passage, see Cosgrove, “Law,” 232–33; Bligh, *Galatians*, 409; Lagrange, *Galates*, 132–33. For 4:31, see Becker, “Galater,” 71; Hansen, *Galatians*, 151; Dunn, *Galatians*, 258–59; Matera, *Galatians*, 180; Rohde, *Galater*, 206; Burton, *Galatians*, 268; Schlier, *Galater*, 228; Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 182.

89 Galatians 4:31 seems unlikely to derive its claim (*διό*) from the immediately preceding citation in 4:30. Since “our” status as children of the free woman could hardly rest on “our” not being cast out, the inference would have to result from “our” being heirs, an implied claim that would beg the question. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 268, who notes that 4:30 does not lead intuitively to the conclusion in 4:31.

90 For a similar defense of 5:1 as the endpoint, see Légasse, *Galates*, 342–43; Malan, “Strategy,” 425.

91 Notable exceptions include Robinson, “Distinction,” 45, who similarly argues that all first-person references in 4:21–5:1 refer to Jewish Christians, and Martin, “Brother,” 16–18, who identifies even the second-person pronoun in 4:28 as referring to the Jewish Christian agitators. Cf. Martin, “Apostasy,” 450–56.

Second, I have argued above that Paul consistently interprets the slave woman/free woman contrast in terms of non-Christian and Christian Jews, respectively. Finally, 4:31 claims not only that “we” are children of the free woman but also that “we” are not children of a slave woman.⁹² At no point, however, does 4:21–30 ever consider the possibility that gentile Christians descend from a slave woman. To the contrary, 4:28 simply asserts their status as children of promise.

Both the slave/free typology in 4:24–27, 30 and the flesh/promise typology in 4:28–29 do, however, seek to differentiate Christian Jews from the non-Christian Jews whom Paul identifies as corresponding to the son of the slave woman. Galatians 4:24–27 goes against convention by aligning non-Christian Jews with the slave woman Hagar while reserving the status of free children for Christian Jews. Galatians 4:28–29 then links Jewish Christians with the gentile children of promise rather than the Jewish children of the flesh. In other words, each section of the argument seeks to establish that Jewish Christians are children of the free woman and not, as Paul’s typologies might otherwise seem to suggest, children of the slave woman.

As a strict reference to Jewish Christians, then, Gal 4:31 summarizes the most salient point of 4:21–30: Jewish Christians are sons of the free woman. Paul thus once again arrives at the same conclusion that appeared in 3:6–14 and 3:15–4:11, namely, that Christ has freed the Jewish Christians from the very slavery that “those desiring to be under law” (4:21) effectively want to embrace. In other words, as the indications of Christian unity in 4:31–5:1—i.e., the vocative ἀδελφοί in 4:31 and the indication of former slavery for the gentiles in 5:1—attest, Christ has freed the Jewish Christians to become like gentiles; the gentile Christians therefore need to stand firm and refrain from becoming like non-Christian Jews.⁹³

Children of Promise Conclusion

Examining Paul’s final appeal to Abraham in Gal 4:21–5:1, Part III has argued that applying the principal insights from the previous chapters of this book

92 Burton, *Galatians*, 267, notes that the lack of an article before παιδίσκης signals a “qualitative emphasis.”

93 Cf. Robinson, “Distinction,” 44–45, who, despite some differences in details, reaches a similar conclusion with regard to the arguments in Gal 3:13–14, 3:23–29, and 4:1–11: “The appeal to the Gentile Galatians is based on, and proceeds from, the true position of believing Jews.”

produce a more compelling and coherent argument than interpreters have usually found. Chapter 7 accordingly showed that a testamentary understanding of the *διαθήκαι* best explains the logical twists and turns in Paul's typological allegory of the two mothers. Chapter 8 then argued that the slave/free and flesh/promise typologies each distinguish different groups of Abrahamic descendants, with the former distinguishing non-Christian and Christian Jews, the latter, Jews and Christian gentiles.

Read in this way, the argument of 4:21–5:1 proceeds as follows. Having asked in 4:21 whether those who desire to be under law actually listen to the law, Paul summarizes the story of Abraham's sons and their mothers so as to highlight the slave/free contrast of the mothers (4:22) and the fleshly/promissory natures of their respective sons' births (4:23). He develops these typologies in turn.

Paul identifies the two mothers as *διαθήκαι* in 4:24–27. The slave woman Hagar he associates with the Sinaitic *διαθήκη* on the grounds that this nonadoptive testament also gives birth into slavery, i.e., it fails to liberate its "children" from the general human slavery to the *στοιχεία* (4:24c–d; cf. 4:1–11). Locating this "Hagar-Sinai mountain" in Arabia (4:25a) then enables Paul to distance the *διαθήκη* from its normally close association with Jerusalem so that he can connect the two through their shared slavery to the *στοιχεία* (4:25b–c), a move that effectively restricts the Sinaitic testament's relevance to the present Jerusalem since the Jerusalem above is free (4:25c–26a). While Paul can assume the slavery of the Sinaitic testament's children, he must argue for the freedom of those Jews who participate in the adoptive Abrahamic *διαθήκη*. He makes this argument by citing Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27, a verse that identifies Jerusalem as a barren woman who gains a multitude of children without ever giving birth. That is to say, she must receive her children through adoption, thereby indicating the involvement of the Abrahamic *διαθήκη*. Since this type of Abrahamic descent also qualifies its participants as sons of God, Paul christens this Jerusalem "the Jerusalem above" and identifies it as the mother of Christian Jews, i.e., of Jews who have received the divine Spirit of sonship.

Galatians 4:28 engages the more straightforward typology of fleshly and promissory births, a distinction that naturally differentiates Jews from Christian gentiles as descendants of Abraham. The seemingly straightforward nature of this typology proves deceiving, however, since Paul does not want to suggest that all Jews necessarily fall on the fleshly side. Accordingly, in 4:29 he expands the flesh/promise typology by respectively identifying the two groups as persecutor/persecuted and by substituting "according to Spirit" for "through a promise" as the key characteristic of this promissory birth. Since non-Christian Jews persecuted Christian Jews and reception of the Spirit differentiated the

latter from the former, these expansions both serve to unite the Jewish Christians with their gentile siblings on the promissory side of the typology. Similarly, 4:30 warns that only Abraham's sons by the free woman will inherit. The gentile Christians must therefore unite with the children of the free woman—i.e., the Jewish Christians—if they want to share in the Abrahamic seed's inheritance.

The passage thus fittingly concludes Paul's discussion of Abrahamic descent by once again affirming the interdependence of Jew and gentile in Christ. Just as the Jewish Christians must identify with the gentile Christians as children of promise, so the gentile Christians must stand firm in freedom with their Jewish Christian counterparts (4:31–5:1). The typology of the free woman's promised children accordingly finds fulfillment only in the union of Jewish Christians (i.e., the children of the free woman) and gentile Christians (i.e., the children of promise).

Conclusion



Jewish Sons, Christ the Seed, and the Gentile Children of Promise

Summary: Abrahamic Descent in Galatians

This book began with the observation that Gal 3–4 defends Paul’s law-free gospel with three main arguments, each of which invokes a different image of Abrahamic descent: “sons” in 3:6–14, “seed” in 3:15–4:11, and “children of promise” in 4:21–5:1. Finding current interpretations of these Abrahamic arguments to be logically problematical, collectively inconsistent, and/or generally unpersuasive, it then set its task as seeking a more coherent and persuasive version of Paul’s argument. Such an argument has indeed emerged,¹ with the recognition that Galatians treats the Abrahamic διαθήκη as a Hellenistic adoptive testament providing the key insight.

Part I examined the “sons of Abraham” (3:7) designation within the context of 3:6–14, arguing that it must refer specifically to Jews and not to Christians. Understood in this way, the initial appeal to Abraham in 3:6–7 does not redefine Abrahamic sonship based on πίστις, as interpreters typically suppose; rather, it highlights πίστις-based righteousness as an essential component in *Jewish* claims to Abrahamic sonship. Not only does this reading better accord with how the Galatians themselves would likely have heard 3:6–7, but it also avoids the numerous significant theological and contextual problems that the broadening interpretation creates. Furthermore, it provides an initial claim with which everyone involved could agree, albeit with different views on what constitutes the requisite expression of πίστις. The burden of 3:6–14 then becomes justifying Paul’s understanding of this πίστις as a “hearing of faith” rather than a faithfulness expressed through “works of law” (cf. 3:2, 5).

Accordingly, 3:8–10 argues that faith considered apart from works of law must ground the righteousness presumed by the Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles since, by definition, no gentile could attain righteousness under the law and remain a gentile. Galatians 3:11–12 then establishes that even the Jews’ justification truly rests not on their law observance but on the faith that motivates their observance. This distinction between law observance and faith

1 The book does find a slight logical blip in 3:20, where Paul’s argument seems to assume that a mediator must represent more than one person. This blip, however, does not undermine his larger point in 3:20. See pp. 195–96.

paves the way for a christological twist in 3:13–14: by becoming accursed under law, Christ effectively severs the tie between faith and law observance (3:13). He thereby enables the Abrahamic blessing promised to the gentiles—i.e., the Spirit of divine sonship—to come in him to those justified by the hearing of faith (3:14a), including those Jews who rejoin the nations by dying to the law and believing into Christ (3:14b; cf. 2:15, 19–20). For reasons that the ensuing arguments in 3:15–4:11 and 4:21–5:1 further explain, the Jewish sons of Abraham thus fully become Abraham’s promised descendants only by surrendering their status as traditional sons of Abraham, an act of faith that conforms them to the image of Isaac in the *Aqedah* and proves them to be sons worthy of their forefather’s example (cf. 3:6–7).

Part II examined the Abrahamic “seed” (3:16, 29) language in the context of 3:15–4:11, arguing that the identification of Christ as the sole Abrahamic seed in 3:16 arises out of Paul’s understanding of the Abrahamic διαθήκη as an instrument of testamentary adoption ratified by God after the *Aqedah* in Gen 22. The promised Abrahamic seed must accordingly be a son of both Abraham and God, a condition fulfilled initially by Christ (3:16) and subsequently by those united in him (3:29). The Jews and gentiles therefore both require incorporation into Christ to inherit as Abraham’s seed, but they require this incorporation for different reasons. For Jewish sons of Abraham, incorporation into Christ protects them from the curse of the law so that they might share in the gentiles’ Abrahamic blessing, i.e., share in the Spirit that qualifies them as sons of God. For gentiles who receive the Spirit of divine sonship as a result of God’s Abrahamic promise to bless the nations, incorporation into Christ enables them to share in the Jews’ Abrahamic sonship. The resulting union of Jew and gentile in Christ—the union, that is, of the Jewish sons of Abraham and the gentile sons of God—then constitutes the single divine Abrahamic seed who inherits (3:29).

This understanding of the Abrahamic seed enables Paul’s identification of Christ as Abraham’s seed in 3:16 to support the verse’s earlier argument for the seed’s singular nature. Paul highlights this singular nature because of its implications for the law. Since God could not supplement the ratified Abrahamic διαθήκη by adding heirs (3:15), the singular nature of the Abrahamic seed proves that the law—which was given to a plurality of Israelites—cannot qualify a person to receive the inheritance promised to the Abrahamic seed (3:19–20). More positively, the singular nature of the seed explains the need for the law: as long as Abraham’s descendants were numbered among the nations, God could not fulfill his promise to bless the nations with the Spirit of divine adoption without creating multiple Abrahamic seeds. He therefore gave the

law to distinguish Abraham's descendants from the nations, thereby excepting them from the promise.

Ultimately, however, the law cannot annul God's previously ratified promise to Abraham to bless all the nations, including Israel (3:17–18). Instead, the law separates the Jews from the nations so that they cannot receive the Abrahamic blessing to the gentiles without transgressing the law and incurring its curse. It accordingly ensures that the Jews cannot receive the Spirit apart from their incorporation into Christ, thereby enforcing the singular nature of the Abrahamic seed. At the same time, by exposing Israel's sinfulness, the law also promotes faith as the true source of righteousness. The law itself thus provides the Jews with the theological resources they need to die to the law and embrace the incorporation into Christ that the law's segregating function necessitates. The resulting step of faith both fulfills and ends the law's role (cf. Rom 10:4).

Galatians 3:23–4:11 argues for this end of the law based on the dual nature of Abraham's singular seed. On the one hand, the gentiles' status as in-Christ heirs of Abraham proves that the Jews in Christ are no longer under the παιδαγωγός of the law (3:23–29). On the other hand, the Jewish Christians' status as Spirit-filled, adopted sons of God proves that the gentile Christians are also sons/heirs of God and thus no longer enslaved to the στοιχέια (4:1–11), a slavery to which they would again be subject were they to come under the law. The appeal to Abraham's seed therefore undercuts any possible motivation for the gentile Galatians to come under the Jewish law.

Finally, Part III examined the "children of promise" (4:28) language in the context of 4:21–5:1, arguing that the phrase designates specifically gentile heirs of Abraham. Understood in this way, the Isaac-Ishmael typology implied in 4:28 serves to contrast Christian gentiles with Abraham's children according to the flesh, i.e., with the Jews. Lest the Galatians understand this conclusion to indict Christian Jews as well, however, Paul first differentiates between non-Christian and Christian Jews in 4:24–27 by interpreting the enslaved Hagar and the free Sarah typologically as, respectively, the nonadoptive Sinaitic testament and the adoptive Abrahamic testament. Galatians 4:29–30 then merges these two paradigms to show that the full typology of the free children of promise ultimately finds fulfillment only in the union of Jewish Christians (i.e., the children of the free woman) and gentile Christians (i.e., the children of promise) in Christ. The passage accordingly concludes by exhorting the gentile Galatian Christians to stand firm with their free Jewish counterparts (4:31–5:1).

To summarize, then, I have argued that the promised Abrahamic "seed" who inherits must be both a son of Abraham and, because of Abraham's divine adoption through the διαθήκη, a son of God. The dual nature of this singular

seed accordingly enables “sons of Abraham” to retain its traditional denotation signifying Jews, i.e., Abraham’s physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob. “Children of promise,” in contrast, refers to those gentiles who, having received the Spirit of divine sonship as a result of God’s promise to bless the nations ἐν Ἀβραάμ, become Abrahamic descendants through their union with the Jews in Christ. This model of Abrahamic descent thus creates an interdependence in which the Jews’ reception of the Abrahamic inheritance depends on the blessing of the gentiles, the gentiles’ reception depends on the physical descent of the Jews, and everyone’s reception depends on Christ, the sole seed.

Differentiating Paul’s three images of Abrahamic descent therefore enables a coherent model of that descent to emerge in Galatians. Moreover, in contrast to more typical interpretations, this model actually produces a coherent argument in Gal 3–4 that accords with Paul’s persuasive intent, i.e., it produces an argument that the gentile Galatians could easily comprehend and that the Jewish agitators could not easily refute. In light of these proposed advantages, however, it becomes necessary to account for the apparent absence of this interpretation from the letter’s extensive history of interpretation. I have identified two factors in particular that help to explain this omission.

First, the extant interpretive tradition largely begins with interpreters who were likely unfamiliar with the Hellenistic practice of testamentary adoption on which this model of Abrahamic descent depends. The earliest eastern interpreter—namely, Irenaeus—does seem to have understood the Abrahamic διαθήκη in the sense of an adoptive testament (see, especially, *Epid.* 8). Other early interpretations, however, come either from western scholars more familiar with Roman law—which did not provide for true testamentary adoption—or from eastern scholars after the apparent decline/demise of testamentary adoption in the centuries after Paul. Without an understanding of the Abrahamic διαθήκη’s adoptive nature, the argument no longer implies Abraham’s divine adoption or, consequently, the dual nature of the Abrahamic seed. Not only does this loss of the seed’s dual nature make it difficult to provide a cogent explanation for Paul’s asserted identification of Christ as the seed, but it also eliminates the primary rationale for distinguishing the letter’s three images of Abrahamic descent.

Second, the extant interpretive tradition emerges from the context of an established gentile church with growing anti-Jewish tendencies. It thus emerges out of a significantly different cultural situation than the situation that Paul addresses when writing to the fledgling, pro-Jewish gentile Christians in first-century Galatia. These different cultural settings produce very different readings of the claim in 3:7 that “οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, these are sons of Abraham.” The

Galatians, for their part, would have had little reason to question the traditional understanding of “sons of Abraham” as an established designation for Jews and, therefore, little reason to read 3:7 as redefining this sonship. In contrast, due in large part to the clear inclusion of gentiles in the Abrahamic seed in Gal 3:29 and the conflating of Abraham’s “seed” (3:16, 29) with his “sons” (3:7) that results from a nonadoptive reading of Gal 3–4, later interpreters have approached this text with the preunderstanding that gentile Christians comprise at least part of the “sons of Abraham.” This perceived change from the traditional understanding of Abrahamic sonship then enables the possibility that 3:7 effects this change by redefining the sons of Abraham based solely on *πίστis*. Furthermore, once interpreters have read 3:7 as a redefinition, they can interpret the surrounding argument in such a way that it contains enough apparent support to make this reading seem viable despite the substantial problems that it creates.

In short, then, I suggest that the seeming novelty of the proposed reading derives from a rather significant lacuna in the history of interpretation, namely, the lack of any roughly contemporary interpretations. In the hundred years or so between the writing of Galatians and the writing of the first extant interpretations, the church lost touch with the Hellenistic legal setting of Paul’s argument and, based largely on Galatians itself, further developed their understanding of Abrahamic sonship. The former development eliminated the ability to understand Paul’s crucial appeals to the practice of testamentary adoption; the latter gave rise to (problematical) new possibilities of interpretation. Furthermore, these two developments, evident in even the earliest extant interpretations of Galatians, have remained largely in place over the ensuing two thousand years, making it highly unlikely that this proposed interpretation of Abrahamic descent would make an appearance. Indeed, it is only the relatively recent recognition that Hellenistic societies likely continued the ancient practice of testamentary adoption into the common era that has enabled this robust challenge to the problematical models of Abrahamic descent that have prevailed in interpretations of Galatians since the second century.

Key Implications

This concluding section highlights a few of the more significant implications of this book. I begin with a methodological observation. Chapter 1 argued that Paul’s persuasive intent should function as a crucial constraint on interpretations of his argument. In other words, it argued that we should prefer

interpretations that better fit the letter's reconstructed rhetorical situation. This criterion has proven to be exceedingly helpful for exposing implausible readings of Paul's argument in Galatians. I suggest that it could prove equally useful for interpreting other epistles.

Of course, as Chapter 1 also noted, the interdependence of the rhetorical situation and Paul's argument makes it impossible to resolve one completely without resolving the other: just as the rhetorical situation provides a check on interpretations of Paul's argument, so the interpretation of Paul's argument helps to determine the nature of the rhetorical situation. I will accordingly now revisit some of the introductory issues discussed in Chapter 1 to see what further light the proposed argument in Galatians might shed.

First, with regard to the disputed question of the location of the Galatian churches, I am inclined to agree with William Ramsay: the grounding of the letter's argument in Hellenistic law suggests that the letter addresses churches in Hellenistic southern Galatia.² It is, of course, possible that Paul instead writes to churches in Celtic northern Galatia and simply misjudges his audience's probable cultural competency. In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, however, the ability to match Paul's argumentation with his audience's cultural background makes a strong case for destinations in southern Galatia.

As for the agitators and their message, a scholarly consensus assumes that much of Paul's Abrahamic argument in Galatians responds directly to claims the agitators have made. In particular, the "surprising" introduction in 3:7 of the "sons of Abraham"—a designation that appears nowhere else in the Pauline corpus—suggests to many interpreters not only that the agitators have already introduced this topic but also that it constitutes the primary point of dispute in the Galatian controversy.³ I have argued, however, that 3:7 does not make the radical claim about Abrahamic sonship that scholars widely assume but instead invokes Abrahamic sonship to make a (more expected) point about justification by faith. As for the unusual "sons of Abraham" designation, Paul's need to reserve his more customary "seed" language for Christ and those in him explains his use of this alternative description to designate Jews in 3:7.

Shorn of this crucial evidence in 3:7, the case for the agitators' introduction of Abraham derives primarily from the perception that Abraham truly supports only the agitators' position. That is to say, it derives from the perceived weakness of Paul's case when contrasted with the strength of the agitators' presumed Abrahamic appeal. Paul himself, after all, provides no indication

² Ramsay, *Galatians*, 180.

³ E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 299–300.

that his arguments seek to rebut the agitators' use of Abraham. He never attributes any specific Abrahamic claims to the agitators, nor does he ever link their argument to Abraham. To the contrary, he always places their call for circumcision in the context of obeying the law and achieving righteousness (e.g., 5:3; 6:12–13; cf. 2:1–21; 4:8–11), never in the context of determining Abrahamic descent. Furthermore, Paul's argument in Galatians clearly uses Abraham to relativize the law's significance (e.g., 3:17–18). The demonstration of a coherent Abrahamic argument in Gal 3–4 therefore suggests that Paul introduces the concept of Abrahamic descent into the discussion as a way of countering the agitators' insistence on law observance.

James Ropes similarly argues that Paul introduces Abraham into the discussion but finds this introduction superfluous since Gal 3:2–5 has already conclusively demonstrated the sufficiency of faith for the gentile Galatians. Ropes therefore accounts for Paul's inclusion of an Abrahamic argument by proposing that 3:6 shifts to address a second oppositional group in Galatia, namely "spiritual perfectionists" with no appreciation of Christianity's Jewish roots.⁴ Scholars rightly reject this proposal based on the absence of any clear differentiation between opponents in the letter. My analysis of Paul's Abrahamic argument, however, also provides a way to resolve Ropes's initial quandary, as I will now show.

Galatians 3:2–5 decisively proves the sufficiency of faith for the gentile Galatians only if one accepts Paul's dichotomy between "works of law" and the "hearing of faith." It is precisely on this point, however, that the agitators would probably balk. Rather than distinguishing between law and faith, the agitators seem more likely to have espoused the typical Jewish view that justifying faith ultimately finds expression in law observance, hence Paul's need to specify that 3:2 and 3:5 have the "hearing of faith" in view rather than simply "faith."⁵ As Part I argues, 3:6–14 then serves largely to establish this dichotomy between a justification by faith that includes "works of law" and a justification based solely on "[the hearing of] faith." The need to counter the agitators' position and justify his proposed distinction thus explains Paul's introduction of Abraham.

A final proposed implication of Paul's Abrahamic argument for the agitators—namely, the contention of Nikolaus Walter and Mark Nanos that the establishing of Christ rather than Isaac as the one true Abrahamic seed in

4 Ropes, *Singular Problem*, 7–11. Cf. Lütgert, *Gesetz*, 60–61.

5 Significantly, then, the agitators would not have argued, e.g., that a person needs faith *and* law observance, a position that presumes a distinction between the two.

3:16 points to a non-Christian Jewish opposition—also appears unwarranted.⁶ The major difficulty with this view lies in the lack of explicit argumentation for the seed's identification with Christ: as Chapter 5 showed, the line of reasoning in 3:15–20 focuses on establishing the seed's singular nature—a point equally amenable to an identification of the seed with Isaac—rather than its identity. The subsequent appeal to Isaac as Abraham's paradigmatic “child of promise” in 4:28 proves difficult for this view as well. In accordance with these observations, my suggestion that Christ's status as the single seed derives from the seed's dual nature removes the need to posit a specifically anti-Isaac polemic and, thus, the proposed implication of non-Christian Jewish opposition.

This book has significant implications for Paul's theology as well. For example, in contrast to recent scholarly skepticism, it suggests that Paul espouses the traditional Christian doctrines of the virgin birth and the incarnation.⁷ It also affirms Paul's advocacy of justification by faith, albeit in a modified form that accounts for Douglas Campbell's critique of more traditional construals.⁸

The theological implications extend far beyond simply confirming traditional doctrines, however, especially with regard to the role of the law and the interdependence of Jews and gentiles in Christ. As the summary above notes, Galatians argues that God gives the law to resolve a dilemma. His διαθήκη with Abraham requires 1) that he bless Abraham's descendants along with all the other nations and 2) that the promised inheritance come to only one Abrahamic seed. God, however, cannot bless Abraham's descendants with the Spirit without creating multiple Abrahamic seeds, i.e., multiple sons of Abraham who are also sons of God (3:15–20). He therefore gives the law to remove the Jews from the nations so that they cannot receive the promised blessing apart from Christ. In other words, Paul argues that God gave the law to compel the Jews into Christ, a task the law achieves through its dual roles of emphasizing trust in God (3:23–29) and separating Israel from the nations (4:1–11).

By tying the role of the law to the coming of the promised Abrahamic seed, this interpretation resolves one of the principal issues that has plagued the New Perspective, namely, what—from Paul's viewpoint—was the problem with the law? Paul does not object to law observance because it is mediated

6 Walter, “Paulus,” 354; Nanos, *Irony*, 154–55. Cf. John Muddiman, “An Anatomy of Galatians,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Michael D. Goulder* (eds. Stanley E. Porter, et al.; BIS 8; Leiden: Brill), 257–70, 266, who draws a similar implication from the more general fact that Paul appeals to Abraham at all.

7 See pp. 235–43.

8 See pp. 58–60.

instead of directly given, because it is bilateral instead of unilateral, because it focuses on human activity in contrast to divine activity, or even because it involves doing instead of believing. No, Paul objects to law observance because the law's purpose was to remove the Jews from the realm of the promised blessing—i.e., the nations—so that they could not share in that blessing apart from Christ. In short, then, he argues that the law pertains strictly to Jews and fulfills its ultimate purpose when Jews transgress it in faith to unite with the accursed-under-law Christ. Coming under law therefore proves incompatible with being in Christ (cf. Gal 5:2–4).

Equally significant, this reading of Paul's argument offers no reason to suggest that Christ either annuls the law or disbands Israel; Galatians maintains Israel's status throughout as God's chosen people under the Mosaic διαθήκη, with all the inherent blessings and responsibilities that that relationship entails.⁹ The consistent distinguishing of Israel *from the church*—i.e., from Abraham's seed—suggests that the oft-debated "Israel of God" on whom Paul wishes mercy in Gal 6:16 refers to traditional Israel.¹⁰ The consistent distinguishing of Israel *from the nations* reflects the truth that, because of the law, both Christ's role and the gospel itself actually differ for Jews and gentiles: the two groups need Christ for different reasons. This distinction then explains not only why Paul and the Jerusalem apostles differentiate the gospels of uncircumcision and circumcision in 2:7, but also why these gospels require distinct apostolates in 2:8–9.¹¹ At the same time, these differences between Jews and gentiles enable their interdependence in Christ in a way that avoids any hint of supersessionism. This construal also upholds the righteousness of God, allowing him to remain faithful to his promises to Abraham and the Jews without showing them partiality in comparison to the gentiles, a theme to which Paul will return in Romans.

Indeed, Romans touches on many themes related to Galatians. Exploring the implications of this reading for Paul's argument in Romans would accordingly require another book. At this point, I simply note that the distinguishing of gentiles and Jews as discrete members of Abraham's σπέρμα in Rom 4:16 (cf. 4:9–12) accords well with the suggested argument in Galatians, as does the

9 This understanding thus eliminates such vexed questions as whether or not it would be better for a Jew to have died right before the crucifixion than to live past the resurrection but—for whatever reason—not come to accept the gospel.

10 So, e.g., Susan Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11," *NTS* 56: 1–29. The τοῦ θεοῦ would not be superfluous if it provides a theological warrant for the mercy wish, a suggestion I owe to Douglas Campbell.

11 See Robinson, "Circumcision," 24.

intermingling of Abrahamic and divine sonships in 9:6–9. The mixture of natural and wild branches in the olive tree analogy of Rom 11:17–24 presents a similarly amenable image: the identification of the olive tree's natural branches as Israel suggests that Abraham constitutes the sustaining root, with the gentiles then being grafted not into Israel but, as in Galatians, into Abraham's family. As for the somewhat different tenor of Paul's Abrahamic argument in Romans, I suggest that it arises from a difference in the underlying situations: in Galatians, the gentile Christians essentially want to become Jews, whereas in Romans, the Jewish and gentile Christians both seem to think that they have no need of the other group (hence, e.g., the warnings against boasting in 2:17–29 and 11:17–36, respectively).¹²

Finally, this book argues for the fundamental importance of the Abrahamic διαθήκη to Paul's gospel and theology. Moreover, it contends that Galatians clearly interprets this διαθήκη as an adoptive Hellenistic testament. The adoptive nature is the crucial component that so many interpretations overlook. On the one hand, adoption marks the point of overlap between testamentary and covenantal understandings of διαθήκη. It thus enables us to explain both the appeal of this gospel to the Jewish Jerusalem apostles as well as Paul's willingness to use διαθήκη in a more covenantal sense elsewhere (Rom 11:27; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6, 14). On the other hand, adoption provides the key to discerning the coherence in the letter's three images of Abrahamic descent. Abraham's divine adoption enables Paul's identification of Christ—the only naturally begotten son of both Abraham and God—as the sole Abrahamic seed (3:16). Christ, in turn, unites the physical Jewish sons of Abraham (3:7) and the Spirit-filled gentile children of promise (4:28) into a single entity, namely, the seed who inherits (3:29). It is this interdependent, tripartite model of Abrahamic descent that in Gal 3–4 serves as the basis for a coherent argument intended to discourage the gentile Galatians from coming under the Jewish law.

12 On the situation in Romans, see, e.g., Francis Watson, "The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1–15:13," in *The Romans Debate* (ed. Karl P. Donfried; rev. and exp. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson), 203–15.

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